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As Assam grieves Garg, miscreants shut shop & block NH

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Rupee hits all-time low of 88.76 against US dollar

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 24 SEPTEMBER 2025 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 1 RABI' II, 1447 AH, AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 261 | Pages: 8

At UNGA, Trump calls climate crisis a 'con job'

UNITED NATIONS, 23 SEPT

US President Donald Trump used his first UN General Assembly speech since 2020 to de-nounce global warming as "the greatest con job ever perpetrated in the world." Addressing world leaders in New York, he called climate change "not a legitimate idea," urged nations to "get away from the green scam," and dismissed scientific predictions as "wrong" and made by "stupid people."

His remarks starkly contradicted the global scientific consensus on climate change.

In the same address to the 80th UN General Assembly, Trump accused China and India of being the "primary funders" of the Ukraine war by continuing to purchase Russian oil.

The Trump administration has imposed a total 50 per cent tariff on India as a penalty for these purchases, among the highest levies worldwide.

> **It's too bad that I had to do these things instead of the UN. I ended 7 wars, dealt with the leaders of each and every one of these countries, and never even received a phone call from the UN offering to help** -Donald Trump

India has criticised these tariffs as "unjusti-fied and unreasonable," asserting it must protect its national interests and economic securi-ty.

Trump also criticised NATO countries for not cutting off Russian energy supplies, saying, "They're funding the war against themselves." He warned that if Russia refuses to negotiate peace, the US is ready to impose stronger tariffs to end the conflict swiftly. Trump urged European nations to join the US in adopting similar measures, stressing that continued en-ergy purchases from Russia waste time and prolong the war. Additionally, Trump repeated his claim that he ended the conflict between India and Pakistan, listing it among seven wars he allegedly stopped within seven months. India, however, has consistently denied any third-party intervention, stating that the ceasefire resulted from direct military talks following Operation Sindoor, India's retaliatory strikes after the Pahalgam terror attack. —*PTI*

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Trump links autism to paracetamol use during pregnancy

WASHINGTON, 23 SEPT

President Donald Trump on Monday said that the use of Tylenol during pregnancy may contribute to rising autism rates in the US, a potential link experts have studied and say is unproven.

Speaking Monday from the White House, the president said women should not take acetaminophen (paracetamol), also known by the brand name Tylenol, "during the entire pregnancy." He also raised unfounded concerns about vaccines. The Trump administration has been under immense pressure from Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr's diverse Make America Healthy Again movement to provide answers on the causes of the marked increase in autism cases in the US.—*PTI*

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HMPV hits children hardest in India

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

A study in The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia found that children, especially those aged 1–2, were most affected by the Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) respiratory infection that broke out in India earlier this year. Most cases showed fever and cough, similar to influenza or acute respiratory illness. The outbreak, linked to seasonal HMPV in China, prompted over 11,000 tests in India in 2024, with 3.3 per cent testing positive. Data from 2019–2025 showed highest positivity in 1–2-year-olds (around 4.5 per cent). Illness lasted about 11 days, with hospital stays averaging seven days. Researchers stressed that continued surveillance is vital to monitor emerging viruses and guide public health policy. —*PTI*

Thimarody banned from Dakshina Kannada for 1yr

MANGALURU/ TUMAKURU, 23 SEPT

The Dakshina Kannada district administration has issued an externment order, banishing activist Mahesh Shetty Thimarody from the district for one year. The order was issued by the Puttur Assistant Commissioner (AC) and directs Thimarody to relocate to Raichur district. According to the order, Thimarody can enter this district only when required by police or court notices. Legal representation for the matter was provided by the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Bantwal, on behalf of the police, and by counsel for Thimarody.—*PTI*

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Trump aide calls Hanuman 'false gold'

HOUSTON, 23 SEPT

A US politician has triggered outrage after calling Hindu God Hanuman "false" and declaring the United States a "Christian nation", drawing criticism from Hindu groups and internet users alike. Republican Senate candidate Alexander Duncan shared a video of the 90-foot Hanuman statue at Sri Ashtalakshmi Temple in Sugar Land, Texas — the tallest Hanuman statue in North America — and posted on social media: "Why are we allowing a false statue of a false Hindu God to be here in Texas? We are a CHRISTIAN nation!"—*PTI*

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9 electrocuted as record rain paralyses Kolkata

Didi blames electricity firm; City sees heaviest rain in 40 yrs

KOLKATA, 23 SEPT

Torrential rain, the heaviest in nearly four decades, paralysed Kolkata on Tuesday, leaving at least 10 people dead, nine due to electrocution, and prompting the West Bengal government to advance Pooja holidays in educational institutions by two days.

The city recorded 251.4 mm of rainfall in less than 24 hours, the highest since 1986 and the sixth-highest in 137 years. Arterial roads turned into rivers, Metro and rail services were disrupted, and flight operations went haywire, with 30 cancellations and 31 delays.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee termed the downpour "unprecedented" and blamed poor dredging of the Farakka barrage and negligence by private power utility CESC for the deaths. "Nine people died due to electrocution. This is unacceptable. CESC must give each victim's family a job and compensation of at least Rs 5 lakh," she said.

Electricity in Kolkata is supplied by CESC, not the state government, Banerjee pointed out, accusing the utility of failing to upgrade its infrastructure or respond swiftly to emergencies.

The state government ordered the closure of all state-run schools and colleges on September 24 and 25. Puja holidays have been advanced. Calcutta University and Jadavpur University suspended academic activities, while many private schools shifted to online classes.

Pooja organisers rushed to pump water out of flooded pandals across south Kolkata. The Indian Meteorological Department reported record rainfall in areas like Garia Kamdahari (332 mm), Jodhpur Park (285 mm), Kalighat (280 mm), and Ballygunge (264 mm).

With high tide expected in the Ganga, Banerjee warned that drainage may worsen due to upstream swelling from Bihar, UP, and Uttarakhand, adding that further flooding cannot be ruled out. —*PTI*

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Commuters make their way through a waterlogged road following rain in Kolkata on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

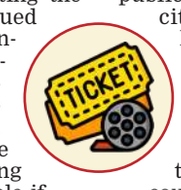
POST PROTEST IN K'TAKA

HC stays ₹200 movie ticket cap

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court has temporarily stayed the enforcement of the Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) (Amendment) Rules, 2025, which capped movie ticket prices at Rs 200 statewide. Justice Ravi V Hosmani granted the interim stay on Tuesday while hearing a petition by the Multiplex Association of India and other cinema stakeholders.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing the petitioners, argued that the government acted arbitrarily by introducing a proviso to fix ticket prices. He questioned the Rs 200 cap, saying there is no rationale if customers are willing to pay more for premium facilities. Rohatgi noted that a similar 2017 order had been suspended and later withdrawn.



Senior advocates Uday Holla and Dhyan Chinnappa said the amendment overreached, as Rule 55 deals with ticket booths, not pricing. D R Ravishankar, representing another theatre operator, said ticket pricing is a private matter between exhibitors and customers and cannot be regulated without clear legislative authority.

The state, represented by additional advocate general Ismail Zabiulla, defended the amendment as a public interest measure, citing powers under Entry 33 of List II of the Constitution to regulate theatres.

The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce sought to intervene, but the court said the matter was not a public interest litigation and would require justification. The interim stay will remain in effect until further orders. —*PTI*

CM urges Wipro to open campus road to ease ORR traffic congestion

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

State Chief Minister (CM) Siddaramaiah has asked Wipro founder Azim Premji to consider allowing limited vehicular movement through the company's campus to ease traffic congestion on Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road (ORR). The ORR, a key IT corridor, often faces severe traffic, especially near Iblur junction during peak hours.

In a letter dated 19 September, Siddaramaiah said preliminary studies by traffic and urban mobility experts suggest that opening a restricted passage through Wipro's campus could reduce congestion on adjacent stretches by up to 30 per cent, improving mobility and commuter experience. He requested that the arrangement be implemented under mutually agreed terms and necessary security measures.

Siddaramaiah and Azim Premji **PHOTO: PTI**

The CM praised Wipro's contribution to Karnataka's IT growth and socio-economic development and urged Premji's support to make Bengaluru a more efficient and livable city. He also asked Wipro's team to engage with government officials to finalize a practical plan quickly. The move comes after industry leaders, including Mohandas Pai and Biocon chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, called for government intervention.—*PTI*

> **Please ask your reporters there (in Delhi) as to how many potholes are there? How many are there in the road that leads to the Prime Minister's residence. I want to tell big IT companies and others that such things (pothole issue) are everywhere, we are doing our job**
>
> —DK Shivakumar, Deputy CM

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Custodial death: SC raps CBI for failing to arrest MP cops

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Tuesday slammed the CBI for failing to arrest two absconding Madhya Pradesh policemen accused in the custodial death of 24-year-old Deva Pardhi.

Hearing a contempt plea by the victim's mother, the bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan said the agency's "helplessness" appeared to be "a garb of protection." The court warned of contempt against top officials and directed the CBI to arrest the accused within a month. It also cautioned jail authorities to ensure the safety of key eyewitness Gangaram Pardhi, currently in judicial custody. —*PTI*

Caste survey is voluntary: State to HC

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Karnataka government on Tuesday defended its contentious Socio-Economic and Educational Survey in the High Court, asserting that it is a voluntary policy tool and not a compulsory caste census.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the state, argued that the survey aims to gather crucial data for evidence-based policy-making and welfare measures. He maintained that the petitioners had mischaracterised the initiative, which does not infringe on privacy or amount to an illegal census.

"This is not a census, and it's not mandatory. It's a legitimate, voluntary government exercise," Singhvi told the court, urging it to avoid granting interim relief at this stage.

However, the bench questioned how the survey could be distinguished from a caste census when it involved identifying and categorising residents by caste. Petitioners countered that the state lacks constitutional authority to carry out such a detailed caste-based enumeration. They described it as a "clandestine census," arguing that it violates citizens' informational privacy and could lead to data misuse or political manipulation. —*Agencies*

'THE KERALA STORY' WINS TOO

Mohanlal, SRK, Rani shine at Nat'l Awards

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The 71st National Film Awards ceremony saw a dazzling celebration of Indian cinema as President Droupadi Murmu conferred top honours on film stars including Mohanlal, Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukerji, and Vikrant Massey.

Malayalam legend Mohanlal received the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award for lifetime achievement, earning a standing ovation. "This award belongs to the entire Malayalam cinema fraternity," said the 65-year-old icon.

"I got to know that when Mohanlal's name was announced for Dadasaheb Phalke, there was wave of happiness among people. It shows that he has made a space for himself in countless people's heart," the president said in her address after the award ceremony.

Shah Rukh Khan and Vikrant Massey shared the Best Actor award for 'Jawan' and '12th Fail' respectively, while Rani Mukerji won Best Actress for 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway', their first National Awards. Cheers and whistles broke the formality as Rani and Shah Rukh took the stage.

Sudipto Sen won Best Director for 'The Kerala Story'. Karan Johar's 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' won Best Popular Film, while Vidhu Vinod Chopra's '12th Fail' bagged Best Feature Film.

Regional cinema was widely recognised: 'Pookalam' (Malayalam), 'Parking' (Tamil), 'Vash' (Gujarati), 'Ullozhokku' (Malayalam), and 'Naal 2' (Marathi) won in key categories. Urvashi and Janki Bodiwala shared Best Supporting Actress, while Vijayaraghavan and MS Bhaskar shared Best Supporting Actor.

The President praised Indian cinema's diversity and increasing focus on women-led stories, saying, "I salute filmmakers who raise women's voices." Shilpa Rao won Best Female Playback Singer ('Chaleya'). —*PTI*

After 33 years and over 100 films, 'The Badshah of Bollywood' Shah Rukh Khan receives his first National Award from President Droupadi Murmu for 'Jawan' **PHOTO: PTI**

Actor Mohanlal with Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukerji, and Vikrant Massey during the National Film Awards ceremony in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: X

NIMHANS starts mental health programme

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), in collaboration with the Ministry of AYUSH, on Tuesday launched AYUSH-MANN, a month-long programme to raise awareness on integrative approaches for mental health and neurological disorders. The launch coincided with the 10th National Ayurveda Day. A mascot, "Swasthmaan – the Elephant of Wisdom and Wellbeing", and a slogan were also unveiled, symbolising harmony between Indian traditions and modern science. The initiative includes an open day at the Department of Integrative Medicine, webinars, podcasts, panel discussions, exhibitions, and awareness drives in community spaces. Established in 2019, NIMHANS' IMD is among India's first dedicated centres integrating Ayurveda, Yoga, and modern medicine. *—PTI*

441kg ganja worth Rs 22 lakh seized in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 23 SEPT

In a significant operation, Belagavi Cyber Crime Police and Raibag Police collaborated to seize 441kg of ganja during a raid in Nidagundi village, Raibag taluk. Officials have indicated that this is among the largest contraband seizures in the district in recent times. The illicit drug was discovered cultivated in a one-acre sugarcane field owned by Singadi Malappa Hirekodi, 45. Police estimate the value of the seized ganja to be around Rs 22 lakh. Investigations have revealed that the accused had been supplying ganja across the Maharashtra-Belagavi border for several days. He has since been arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled commended the joint operation and the coordinated efforts of the police teams involved. *—SALAR NEWS*

I've seen potholes outside Modi's house, says DKS

Says media is blowing City's infra woes out of proportion

The condition of City's roads have come under scrutiny recently, as seen by the state of Mysore Road near Nayandahalli flyover, on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said the pothole issue is there across the country, even the road leading up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence in Delhi has potholes, the issue in State is being blown out of proportion

Shivakumar, who is also the minister in charge of Bengaluru development said, that the authorities are filling 1,000 potholes in the City everyday.

"I travelled around Delhi just a day ago. The media must review and report how many potholes are there on Delhi's roads including the road to PM's residence. Potholes are a problem across the country. Only Karnataka's issues are being blown out of proportion. I would like to tell everyone, including the big businesses in Bengaluru, that we are doing our job of filling potholes," he said at his Sadashivanagar residence before leaving for Bihar.

"If the roads had been maintained well from the BJP's period, we would not have had reached this stage. They did not bother to do anything to fix the potholes, but now they are raising this issue as the elections are approaching."

"We are filling potholes, despite rain, we are doing it. Work is on daily to fill about a thousand potholes in each corporation (5 corporations in City)," Shivakumar added. "Please ask your reporters there (in Delhi) as to how many potholes are there? How many are there in the road that leads to the Prime Minister's residence?"

BIHAR VISIT

Shivakumar, who is also the Congress state president, along with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will be going to Bihar to participate in the Congress Working Committee meeting in Patna on 24 September.

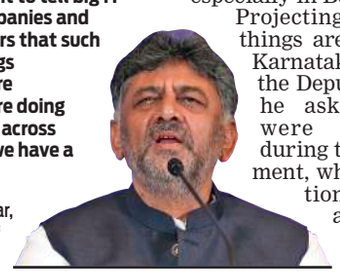
"We have our Congress Working Committee Meeting in Bihar tomorrow, CM is leaving today evening. There is also an extended working committee meeting under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, and we will be attending it," Shivakumar said.

BJP TO PROTEST ON 24 SEPT

The BJP has also decided to stage a road blockade protest on 24 September in all 224 Assembly constituencies on the issue of the condition of the roads across the state, especially in Bengaluru.

Projecting as if such things are there only in Karnataka is not right, the Deputy CM said, as he asked, "If roads were maintained during the BJP government, why such a situation would have arisen now?" *— Salar News with Agencies*

> **I want to tell big IT companies and others that such things (pothole issue) are everywhere, we are doing our job. It is there across the country, but we have a duty, we will do it**
>
> —DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister



BMRCL: Must clear junk near construction sites

Noting that junk and debris left around Bengaluru Metro Rail Projects were clogging traffic around Metro construction sites, the Bengaluru Metro Rails Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) has directed all supervisors and contractors to ensure that all such objects were immediately cleared on completion of a project. The 20 Sept circular added that the road must be restored to its original width/alignment and that if any potholes were noted during the Metro constructions, they must be fixed immediately. However, it provided contractors and supervisors an exception in the case of heavy rains, floodwater or non-availability provided they seek a letter of approval from the relevant authority.

—Salar News

D'STHALA MASS BURIALS

Thimarody banned from Dakshina Kannada

MANGALURU/ TUMAKURU, 23 SEPT

- Activist Mahesh Shetty Thimarody has the option to file a review of the transfer order with the government or the High Court if needed

The Dakshina Kannada district administration has issued an externment order, banishing activist Mahesh Shetty Thimarody from the district for one year.

The order was issued by the Puttur Assistant Commissioner (AC) and directs Thimarody to relocate to Raichur district.

According to the order, Thimarody can enter this district only when required by police or court notices. Legal representation for the matter was provided by the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Bantwal, on behalf of the police, and by counsel for Thimarody.

Thimarody has the option to file a review of the transfer order with the government or the High Court if needed.

The administration stated that the transfer is effective immediately and is in accordance with existing procedures.

According to the district officials, the decision was taken following various hurdles in the way of the investigation in the Dharmasthala case, which is being carried out by the Special Investigating Team.

Earlier in the day, the SIT officials unearthed a money trail involving close associates of Thimarody.

A few days back, a dagger and fire arm were also found in his house.

PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWER'S WIFE

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday said that authorities would extend protection to the family of the Dharmasthala complainant.

Speaking to reporters in the district headquarter town of Tumakuru, Parameshwara said the police will ensure safety if needed.

Responding to a query that the whistleblower's wife had said that her life was in danger and she needed protection, the minister said, "If we come across anything like that, then we will certainly give them protection because there is a big investigation happening at Dharmasthala. If someone faces problem in bringing out the truth, then we will certainly protect them".

The complainant was earlier arrested on charges of perjury. *—PTI*

SPIRIT OF DASARA

Devotees throng Gangamma Devi temple in Malleswaram, Bengaluru, during Dasara festivities, on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

Mob torches vehicle transporting beef 'illegally' near Belagavi town

BELAGAVI, 23 SEPT

A truck allegedly transporting beef illegally to neighbouring Telangana was set on fire by locals in Ainapur town in Kagawad taluk in Belagavi district on Monday night, police said.

The truck was on its way from Kudachi town in Raibag taluk to Hyderabad when it was stopped near the Siddeshwar temple in Kagawad taluk. On inspection, locals found beef inside the vehicle. Angered by the discovery, they set the truck ablaze, police added.

By the time fire tenders from the Belagavi Fire Department and Ugar Sugar Factory arrived, the vehicle had already been completely gutted.

Miscreants burnt a truck carrying nearly five tonnes of beef in Ainapur town, Belagavi district, late Monday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Ainapur Assistant Police Inspector Raghavendra Khot stated that the truck was carrying nearly five tonnes of beef.

Belagavi District Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled said that five individuals have been taken into custody in connection with the incident. Cases have been registered under the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act and for robbery.

—Salar News with Agencies

Man murders wife at City bus stop in front of daughter

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

A 32-year-old woman was stabbed to death by her husband in front of her teenage daughter at Sunkadakatte bus stand in City on Monday, police said on Tuesday.

The victim, **Rekha**, married **Lohitashwa**, 35, just three months ago, and this was the second marriage for both. According to police, the couple often quarreled, and after an argument that morning, Rekha left for the bus stand with her 13-year-old daughter.

Lohitashwa allegedly followed, confronted her, and stabbed her multiple times in the chest and stomach. Despite bystanders' attempts to intervene, he threatened them with the knife before fleeing. Rekha died on the spot while her daughter witnessed the murder.

Rekha worked at a call centre, and Lohitashwa was a cab driver. They met through friends and married after 18 months of courtship. Rekha lived with her elder daughter from her first marriage, while her younger child stayed with her parents.

Police suspect marital discord as the motive. A case of murder has been registered at the Kamakshipalya police station, and efforts are on to nab the accused. *—PTI*

T'gana to move SC against Almatti height increase

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Telangana has sought 70 per cent share of the Krishna river water earlier allocated to the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh, with Telangana Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy saying that the state's claim was built on "rational and internationally accepted parameters".

The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) on Tuesday heard Telangana's arguments on sharing Krishna river waters between the two Telugu states.

Telangana has been presenting its final arguments through senior advocate S Vaidyanathan, who has been allotted three days to argue the case in detail under Section 3 reference of the tribunal proceedings.

"Whether Karnataka has a Congress government, Andhra Pradesh a TDP government or Maharashtra a BJP government, Telangana will fight uncompromisingly for its fair share. Not a single drop of Telangana's rightful water will be given up," Reddy said.

He opposed State's proposal to increase the height of the Almatti Dam, warning that it would directly harm Telangana's interests.

He said Telangana would approach the Supreme Court to challenge the proposal.

"Our government's stand is very clear, Telangana will not permit any action that reduces its share. We will approach the Supreme Court to ensure Karnataka is not allowed to raise the Almatti height," he stated.

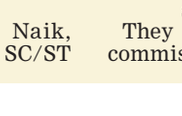
The Krishna river is the fourth-largest river system in India by water reservoir capacity and flows through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. *—PTI*

Mask 14 SC/ST Christian 'castes': BJP on caste survey

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Opposition BJP on Tuesday alleged that the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes, which is conducting the Social and Education Survey, is not functioning independently and that it is being "remote controlled".

A delegation of BJP leaders led by the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, Chalavadi Narayanswamy, submitted a memorandum to the Backward Classes Commission Chairman Madhusudan R Naik, demanding that 14 SC/ST castes having dual identity nomenclature like -- Madiga Christian, Banjara Christian, Valmiki Christian -- should also be hidden or "masked" in the 'App' used for the survey.



They questioned why the commission did not mask these 14 SC/ST castes, when it decided to mask 33 other castes with similar dual identities having a word Christian suffixed to them.

The commission has however clarified that 14 castes referred to by the BJP delegation are not part of its castes list anymore, as they have already been removed. *—PTI*

AFTER OPPN'S OBJECTIONS

HM, 10 others to review Crowd Control Bill

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader has constituted an 11-member "scrutiny committee" of the House headed by Home Minister G Parameshwara, to review the 'Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Place of Gathering) Bill, 2025'.

During the legislature session last month, Opposition parties had pushed the Congress government to refer the Bill to a house committee for detailed discussion and scrutiny, saying that the proposed legislation may curtail protests and impact cultural and religious events.

The Bill was introduced after the Chinnaswamy stampede where 11 people died.

The Bill, with penal provisions, is aimed at effectively controlling the crowd and managing mass gatherings at events and functions, and preventing unlawful gatherings.

The Bill was proposed after the 4 June Chinnaswamy stampede, where 11 people died **PHOTO: PTI**

"The Speaker has constituted a scrutiny committee consisting of the members of the Legislative Assembly.... to examine and submit a report" on the Bill, a note from the Assembly Secretariat said.

The committee consists of Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil, MLAs -- Rizwan Arshad, Shreenivasaiah N, Ravishankar D, Srinivas V Mane, Prakash K Koliwad, HD Thammaiah, V Sunil Kumar, SR Vishwananath, and GD Harish Gowda.

While presenting the Bill last month, Parameshwara said any mass gathering event in which less than 7,000 people are expected will require permission from the jurisdictional police station, while those with above 7,000 and less than 50,000 will require permission from DySP or ACP (in City). Events where more than 50,000 people are expected will require permission from SP or Commissioner. *—PTI*

UNFILTERED

"The things we import... conducting research on them, reducing imports, and increasing exports is the biggest form of nationalism

—NITIN GADKARI, Union Minister

Rubio hints at fixing India sanctions over Russian oil

Rubio reiterates Trump's ceasefire claim after meeting EAM

NEW YORK, 23 SEPT

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has indicated that the Trump administration is open to revisiting punitive measures imposed on India over its continued purchases of Russian oil, calling the issue something "we hope we can fix."

In an interview with NBC Today, Rubio said, "We've already seen the measures we've taken with regards to India, although that's something we hope we can fix." He noted that while the US has imposed a 25 per cent additional tariff on Delhi — taking the total tariff burden to 50per cent — European nations still continue to buy "massive amounts of oil and gas from Russia," which he termed "absurd."

The Secretary of State added that President Trump is considering further actions in response to the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict, stating, "He didn't start this war. He inherited it, and all he's wanted to do is end it."

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in New York, USA, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Rubio also reiterated a controversial claim that Trump had helped end conflicts in various regions, including between India and Pakistan. "And look what the President's done and the wars he's brought about to an end—Thailand and Cambodia, India and Pakistan... That doesn't sound like a third-world country to me," he said, praising Trump's global influence.

India, however, maintains that the ceasefire understanding with Pakistan came through direct military-level talks between the two nations' Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs), with no third-party mediation involved.

Rubio's remarks come just a day after his first in-person meeting with India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, amid tensions over trade tariffs and India's Russian energy purchases.

Meanwhile, at the UNGA, India used the platform to advocate for climate resilience in the Global South. Sibi George, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, showcased India's Heat Action Plans, low-cost cooling solutions, and early-warning systems, reaffirming India's commitment to disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation. He also offered India's support to other developing nations in tackling climate-linked challenges, stressing the importance of digital tools for last-mile alerts and inclusive climate strategies. —PTI

Prashant Kishor had accused Ashok Choudhary of purchasing benami properties worth Rs 200 crore via close relatives and a trust **PHOTO: PTI**

Apologise or pay ₹100 cr Bihar neta to Prashanth

PATNA, 23 SEPT

- The notice warns Kishor to provide proof or issue a written and oral apology within a week.

Bihar minister and JD(U) leader Ashok Choudhary has sent a legal notice to Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor, demanding an unconditional public apology or face a Rs 100 crore civil defamation suit. Kishor had recently accused Choudhary of purchasing benami properties worth Rs 200 crore via close relatives and a trust.

The notice, sent through advocate Kumar Anjaneya Shanu, warns Kishor to provide proof or issue a written and oral apology within a week, accusing him of "irreparably damaging" Choudhary's reputation.

The row comes as BJP leader and former Union minister RK Singh demanded that Choudhary and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary either "come clean" on allegations or resign. Singh referenced Kishor's corruption claims, including questions over Choudhary's D-Litt degree, allegedly obtained without completing Class 10.

Singh, who lost the Ara Lok Sabha seat, warned of campaigning against sitting BJP and JD(U) leaders who, he alleges, undermined him. He urged the ministers to counter Kishor's claims legally or step down to preserve the NDA's credibility.

This marks the second legal action by Ashok Choudhary against Kishor, who was earlier sued for alleging a bribe was paid to secure an election ticket for Choudhary's daughter. —PTI

India extends airspace closure for Pak till 24 Oct

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

India has extended the closure of its airspace for Pakistan civilian and military planes till 24 October . The neighbouring country has also closed its airspace for Indian aircraft till 24 October. Both countries have shut their respective airspace for each other's planes since April in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. India and Pakistan have issued separate Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) for extending the airspace closures. Following the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people, India closed its airspace for planes operated, owned or leased by Pakistan airlines from 30 April. —PTI

PHOTO: PTI

Politicians need to be thick skinned: HC to BJP's Bhatia

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said politicians must be 'thick-skinned' but stressed the need to distinguish between satire and defamation. Justice Amit Bansal made the remarks while hearing BJP leader Gaurav Bhatia's plea seeking removal of allegedly defamatory social media posts. The posts mocked his appearance on a TV show, where he was seen in a kurta without pyjamas. Bhatia said he was wearing shorts and claimed the footage violated his privacy. The judge refused to pass an ex parte order, noting only obscene remarks should be removed. The matter will be heard on 25 September.—PTI

Cop found dead in Haryana Minister's house

GURUGRAM, 23 SEPT

A Haryana police constable posted outside minister Rao Narbir Singh's Gurugram residence was found dead in a guard room early Tuesday, police said. The constable, Jagbir Singh, 49, was discovered unconscious around 2.30 am and later declared dead at a hospital. While staff suspect suicide, police said all angles are being probed and a post-mortem will confirm the cause. A resident of Jhajjar's Sukhpura village, Jagbir earlier served in the Army's Jat Regiment before joining the state police in 2014. He was deployed at the minister's residence after the 2024 Assembly elections.—PTI

GST cut 8yrs ago would have saved lakhs: TN CM

CHENNAI, 23 SEPT

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the recent Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms, arguing that Indian families could have saved far more had such measures been implemented earlier. Responding, Stalin said these were long-standing demands of the Opposition and, had they been introduced eight years ago, families across the country would already have benefited by "many lakh more." He also pointed out that 50 per cent of the relief under the GST reforms had been borne by states.—PTI

Armed forces to conduct biggest-ever drone exercise

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

India's armed forces will conduct their largest-ever joint exercise focused on drones and counter-drone systems from 6–10 October in Madhya Pradesh, a senior official confirmed on Tuesday. The tri-service drill, named Exercise Cold Start, is being organised by the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) and will involve the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

The exercise comes five months after Operation Sindoor, India's response to the Pahalgam terror attack, which exposed the growing role of unmanned aerial threats in modern warfare.

"We will be testing some of our drones and counter-UAS systems to build a more robust air defence capability," said Air Marshal Rakesh Sinha, Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations), at a conference on air defence in Delhi. Industry partners, R&D institutions, and academia will also participate.

Air Marshal Sinha said Operation Sindoor was a wake-up call. "It showed how drones can be central players in battle, used for intelligence, disruption and direct attacks. Our adversary has adapted well using cheap commercial drones. We must stay ahead through innovation and collaboration," he said.

The upcoming exercise aims to test technologies that can detect, identify and neutralise drone threats, even in complex electromagnetic environments, with precision and minimal collateral damage. —PTI

SP's Azam Khan walks out of jail after 2 years

LUCKNOW/SITAPUR, 23 SEPT

Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Azam Khan was released from Sitapur jail on Tuesday after nearly two years, drawing large crowds of supporters. The 77-year-old former Uttar Pradesh Cabinet minister thanked "all who prayed for him" but refrained from calling it justice.

Party chief Akhilesh Yadav hailed Khan's release, calling it "a moment of great joy" and pledged that all "false cases" against Khan would be withdrawn if SP returns to power. He also accused the BJP government of dropping cases against its own leaders while targeting opponents.

Speculation about Khan joining the Bahujan Samaj Party was dismissed by SP's Shivpal Yadav as "rumours". BJP's Keshav Prasad Maurya said Khan's political affiliation wouldn't affect the 2027 elections. Rampur BJP MLA Akash Saxena, who filed several cases against Khan, vowed to continue his legal battle.

Khan's release follows a recent Allahabad High Court bail in a land encroachment case, nearly five years after the original FIR. —PTI

SP leader Azam Khan being welcomed after he was released from Sitapur Jail in Bareilly **PHOTO: PTI**

'Hindus declined from 60 cr to 30 cr due to invaders'

LUCKNOW/ GUWAHATI, 23 SEPT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday claimed that India's Hindu population fell from 60 crore in the 12th century to 30 crore by Independence due to "atrocities of invaders" and other hardships under foreign rule.

Speaking at a state-level workshop on Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Adityanath said the decline wasn't only due to violence but also famine, disease, and systemic oppression. He criticised unnamed political groups for continuing a "foreign mentality" by dividing society along caste, region and language lines, and urged the public to embrace Swadeshi. "From a needle to an aeroplane, India is now manufacturing everything under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership," he said.

Meanwhile in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that 37 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants had been "pushed back" from the Sribhumi sector. Sharing blurred images on X, Sarma declared, "Goodbye infiltrators; your time's up in Assam!"

He warned that all "unwanted guests" would be dealt with similarly and said at least 35–40 people are being "pushed back" each week. —PTI

Joblessness is directly linked to vote chori, says Rahul

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed that as long as elections are "stolen", unemployment and corruption in India will continue to rise, warning that young people will no longer tolerate "job theft" and "vote theft".

In a post on X in Hindi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said unemployment is the biggest challenge facing India's youth and is directly linked to electoral malpractices. "When a government wins public trust, its first duty is to provide employment and opportunities to the youth," he said.

Gandhi alleged that the BJP does not win elections honestly, instead staying in power by manipulating votes and controlling institutions. He blamed this for unemployment reaching a 45-year high, declining job opportunities, collapsed recruitment processes, and widespread corruption in exams and recruitment.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claimed that the government was 'manipulating' institutions, leading to the 45-year unemployment high **PHOTO: ANI**

Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi said the government focuses on PR, celebrity endorsements, and billionaire profits rather than addressing youth concerns.

"The country's youth work hard, dream, and fight for their future, but the government has made it its identity to shatter these hopes," he said.

He added that India's youth now understand that the fight is not just for jobs but against vote theft, asserting that true patriotism lies in freeing the country from unemployment and electoral fraud. Gandhi shared a video juxtaposing police action against protesting students with Modi's PR activities. —PTI

"When Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition (in the Lok Sabha), raised the issue in Parliament, the institution concerned should have taken note of it. But what is happening is that when Gandhi raises questions and criticises ECI, the ECI does not answer - it is the BJP and its leaders who respond

-Sharad Pawar, NCP (SP) Chief

'US A CHRISTIAN NATION'

False God: US leader's remark on Hanuman sparks fury

HOUSTON, 23 SEPT

A US politician has triggered outrage after calling Hindu God Hanuman "false" and declaring the United States a "Christian nation", drawing criticism from Hindu groups and internet users alike.

Republican Senate candidate Alexander Duncan shared a video of the 90-foot Hanuman statue at Sri Ashtalakshmi Temple in Sugar Land, Texas — the tallest Hanuman statue in North America — and posted on social media:

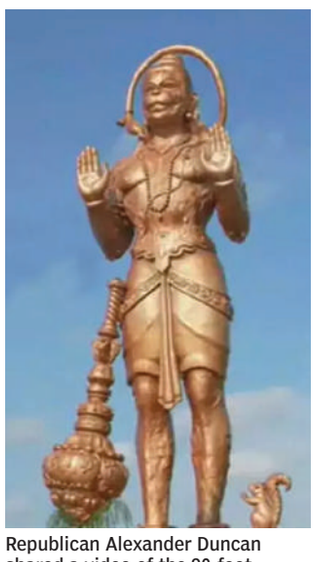
"Why are we allowing a false statue of a false Hindu God to be here in Texas? We are a CHRISTIAN nation!"

His remarks provoked a sharp response from the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), which accused Duncan of spreading anti-Hindu hate and violating the Republican Party's own anti-discrimination guidelines.

Alexander Duncan **PHOTO: X**

The comments sparked wider backlash online. One user responded, "Just because you're not Hindu doesn't make it false. The Vedas were written almost 2000 years before Jesus and are extraordinary texts."

Another pointed out, "We may be a Christian majority nation, but if you try to claim that other beliefs are not allowed, then you're advocating a theocracy, which is antithetical to American values." —PTI



Republican Alexander Duncan shared a video of the 90-foot Hanuman statue in Texas **PHOTO: X/@SaffronSunanda**

Delhi CM allows speakers till 12am for Ramleela

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced that events such as Ramleela and Durga Pooja can now run until midnight, asserting that "Ram-rajya should come in Delhi" and calling for collective effort to support Hindu festivals.

"Which Ramleela ends at 10 pm? When Dandiya in Gujarat continues all night, why should Delhiites be restricted?" Gupta asked, noting that Hindu festivals have long faced limitations.

The Delhi government has extended the permissible time for the use of loudspeakers and public address systems from 10pm to 12am for Ramleela, Durga Pooja, Dasara, and related events between 22 September and 3 October. Meanwhile, the Luv Kush Ramleela Committee has dropped actor Poonam Pandey from the role of Mandodari, Ravana's wife, following objections from several groups. —PTI

BJP forces Cong leader to wear saree over PM post

DOMBIVLI, 23 SEPT

A political storm has erupted in Maharashtra after a video went viral showing BJP workers in Dombivli forcing 73-year-old Congress leader Prakash "Mama" Pagare to wear a saree. The incident was reportedly in retaliation for a social media post in which Pagare allegedly shared a morphed image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The footage shows BJP workers draping a pink saree around Pagare on a public road, as he resisted and protested. Chants of "Glory be to the Bharatiya Janata Party!" can be heard in the background. The demonstration was led by BJP's Kalyan district president, Nandu Parab, who warned that any attempt to defame party leaders would be met with a "stronger reply."

Pagare, however, denied creating the post, claiming he had only forwarded an existing image on Facebook. He alleged that he was confronted by BJP workers while leaving a hospital and forced into public humiliation.

The episode has drawn criticism from across the political spectrum, with many condemning the growing aggression and vigilantism in political rivalries. The incident highlights the increasingly bitter confrontations between parties in Maharashtra as tensions rise ahead of key electoral battles. —Agencies

A viral video shows BJP workers draping a pink saree around Congress leader Prakash 'Mama' Pagareon a road, as he resisted amid chats of 'glory to BJP' **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Teen dies during abortion, teacher held for rape

YAVATMAL, 23 SEPT

A 27-year-old tuition teacher from Maharashtra's Yavatmal district has been arrested for allegedly raping a 17-year-old student over nine months, police said on Tuesday. The girl, who became pregnant as a result of the assaults, died on Monday in a Nanded hospital while undergoing treatment following an attempted abortion. According to the police complaint, the accused befriended the teenager while giving her tuition and repeatedly sexually exploited her. After learning of the pregnancy, he allegedly took her to Pusad town and gave her an abortion pill, after which her condition worsened. The teacher has been booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. *—PTI*

TN doubles mangrove cover in 3 years

CHENNAI, 23 SEPT

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has successfully doubled the state's mangrove cover in three years, from 4,500 hectares in 2021 to 9,039 hectares in 2024. Chennai's Adyar Estuary now boasts a lush green belt, created under the Tamil Nadu Mangrove Mission across nine coastal districts. The initiative protects communities from cyclones and tsunamis, supports fish breeding, and enhances biodiversity. The Chennai Forest Division has installed canals and barriers to safeguard mangroves. Ahead of the Tamil Nadu Mangrove Conclave 2025 in Mahabalipuram, the department released a video showcasing Pichavaram Mangrove Forests. Officials, including Forest Minister R S Rajakannappan, will inaugurate the event. *—PTI*

2 killed as 3-storey house collapses in Indore

INDORE, 23 SEPT

A tenant of the three-storey building that collapsed in Indore's Ranipura area on Monday night, killing two people, claimed he had warned the landlord of the imminent danger days earlier. Electrical goods trader Shashank Gupta said he alerted landlord Sammu Ansari after noticing structural issues but was ignored. Gupta had moved 70 per cent of his stock out of the rented warehouse before the collapse. Twelve people were injured and rescued after a five-hour operation; all are hospitalised. The deceased were identified as Alifa, 20, and Fahimuddin Ansari, 40. Heavy rain, waterlogging, and rat burrowing had reportedly weakened the foundation. Police and civic authorities have launched an investigation. The building housed 22 members of Ansari's family and three rented rooms. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Katrina Kaif, Vicky announce pregnancy

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Bollywood stars Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal announced on Tuesday that they are expecting their first child. The couple shared a polaroid on Instagram, beaming at Katrina's baby bump, captioning it, "On our way to start the best chapter of our lives with hearts full of joy and gratitude." Katrina and Vicky married on 9 December, 2021 in Rajasthan. Vicky recently starred in 'Chhaava' and will appear in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 'Love and War,' while Katrina was last seen in the 2024 thriller 'Merry Christmas' with Vijay Sethupathi *—PTI*

Kolkata rains washout Durga pooja prep

Durga Pooja organisers worried as rains damage most of the marquees just ahead of festival

Commuters wade through flooded streets and shopkeepers raise goods to safety after heavy rain inundates parts of Kolkata, disrupting Durga pooja preparations **PHOTO: PTI**

KOLKATA, 23 SEPT

Lakhs of residents in Kolkata awoke on Tuesday to a city under water, with vast stretches of south and central Kolkata submerged after overnight torrential rain. In areas like Garia and Jodhpur Park, residents found knee-to-waist-deep water inside homes, shops, and streets, leading to widespread panic and disruption.

Frantic efforts were made to move furniture to upper floors, while traders in Gariahat and College Street tried to save waterlogged goods, including books, garments and electronics. Vehicles floated like boats in the flooded streets, buses broke down mid-route, and desperate commuters walked barefoot through murky floodwaters.

"I walked nearly 3km in waist-deep water from Lake Gardens to Rashbehari Avenue. I don't know how I'll get back," said office-goer Rupa Chatterjee.

Transport chaos was compounded by app cabs charging exorbitant surge fares. "Cabs asked Rs 600 for a ride that usually costs Rs 150, autos refused to ply," said a commuter at Park Circus.

Mayor and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim admitted the civic body's pumps were overwhelmed. "Canals and rivers are full. Every time water is pumped out, more comes in. The situation may ease only after tonight's low tide," he said.

Major arteries like EM Bypass, AJC Bose Road and Central Avenue were waterlogged, while traffic choked at Park Circus, Behala, Gariahat, and College Street. Smaller lanes in central and southern Kolkata were cut off entirely.

At College Street and Gariahat, the pavements became makeshift graveyards of livelihoods as traders, their faces etched with despair, piled sodden books that bled ink, garments dripping in limp heaps, and lifeless electronics spilling out of broken cartons, each discarded item a reminder of earnings washed away before puja.

The rain in Kolkata forced Durga pooja organisers to defer the inauguration of the idols as it wreaked serious damage to marquees that are complete or nearly so, and pushed back the intricate decoration work by artisans.

The IMD has warned of more heavy rain in South 24 Parganas, Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Jhargram. A fresh low-pressure area is likely over the Bay of Bengal around 25 September. *—PTI*

Govt assigns depts to handle disasters

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The government has designated specific ministries and departments to manage disaster monitoring, early warning, prevention, and response.

The Ministry of Defence will handle avalanches and oil spills, while the Ministry of Earth Sciences will oversee alerts for cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes, lightning, and more.

The Health Ministry will manage biological disasters. The Agriculture Ministry will handle droughts, pest attacks, and hailstorms, while Jal Shakti will oversee floods and glacial lake outbursts. Urban floods fall under Housing and Urban Affairs; forest fires and chemical disasters under Environment Ministry; landslides under Mines; and nuclear emergencies under Atomic Energy. *—PTI*

8 dead in Marathwada rain havoc

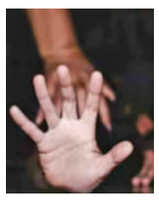
Incessant rains have battered Maharashtra's Marathwada region since 20 September, leaving eight people dead and causing widespread damage to homes, crops, roads, and infrastructure.

According to officials, more than 750 houses were damaged and crops on over 33,000 hectares destroyed, primarily in Dharashiv district, where boats and helicopters were deployed to rescue stranded villagers. A total of 159 villages were affected, with 186 livestock lost. Fatalities included three in Latur, two in Beed, and one each in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Nanded, and Dharashiv, due to drowning, lightning, and other causes. Heavy rainfall also damaged roads, two schools, five small dams, and three bridges across Jalna, Beed, and Sambhajinagar. The Dharashiv district administration reported severe impact in Paranda (96 villages), Bhum (53), and other talukas. Rainfall there reached 833.5 mm—149 per cent above normal.

TN student ragged, stripped & beaten

MADURAI, 23 SEPT

A case of ragging has emerged from Madurai after a student at an Industrial Training Institute (ITI) was allegedly stripped and violently assaulted by his peers at a hostel in Tamil Nadu's Thirumangalam. The incident came to light through a viral video that has sparked widespread public outrage.



The disturbing footage, which circulated on social media, reportedly shows a group of students mocking the victim, forcibly removing his clothes, and hitting him on his private parts with a slipper. The brutal assault has triggered demands for immediate and strict action against the culprits.

The victim's parents initially reported the harassment to the institute's authorities but, after no action was taken, they lodged a formal complaint with the police. Following their report, an official case was registered against the accused. Authorities have since suspended the hostel warden pending a full inquiry. Police have launched a comprehensive investigation to identify every student involved in the assault and to determine how the horrifying video was filmed and shared online.

This incident has reignited the national debate over campus safety and the persistent problem of ragging, despite a nationwide ban. It highlights the urgent need for stricter enforcement of anti-ragging laws and greater accountability from educational institutions to ensure the safety of their students. *—PTI*

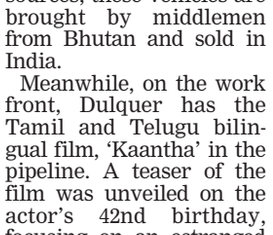
GOVT SAYS NO TO AYODHYA MOSQUE

AYODHYA, 23 SEPT

The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) has rejected the plan for a mosque in Dhannipur village due to missing no-objection certificates (NOCs) from several government departments. The five-acre plot was allotted to the Sunni Central Waqf Board following the Supreme Court's 2019 verdict.

According to an RTI reply dated 16 September, the ADA cited the absence of NOCs from the Public Works, Pollution Control, Civil Aviation, Irrigation, Revenue, Municipal Corporation, and Fire Services departments. The mosque trust had submitted its application on 23 June 2021 and paid Rs 4,02,628 in scrutiny fees.

Mosque trust secretary Athar Husain expressed dismay, stating, "The Supreme Court mandated the land, and the UP government allotted it. I'm speechless as to why departments withheld NOCs." *—PTI*



Dulquer Salmaan, Prithviraj raided over luxury cars

KOCHI, 23 SEPT

As part of Operation Numkoor, customs officials conducted raids at the residences of film actors Prithviraj Sukumaran and Dulquer Salmaan.

Raids followed the discovery that luxury cars were being smuggled into India via Bhutan without paying taxes.

Raids are being carried out at 30 locations in Kerala today.

Raids are being conducted at various locations in Kozhikode as well.

According to customs sources, these vehicles are brought by middlemen from Bhutan and sold in India.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Dulquer has the Tamil and Telugu bilingual film, 'Kaantha' in the pipeline. A teaser of the film was unveiled on the actor's 42nd birthday, focusing on an estranged relationship between a father and son.

Prithviraj was seen in 'Sarzameen', an action thriller film written and directed by Kayoze Irani. It was produced by Karan Johar, Hiroo Yash Johar, and Apoorva Mehta under Dharma Productions, in collaboration with Star Studios. *—PTI*

SETTLE VIA LOK ADALAT

Ram Varma acquitted in 2018 cheque bounce case

MUMBAI, 23 SEPT

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has been acquitted in a 2018 cheque bounce case by a Mumbai sessions court, following an amicable settlement with the complainant company through a Lok Adalat.

The case was originally filed after Varma's firm issued two dishonoured cheques in 2018 for payment of hard disks worth Rs 2,38,220, supplied by the company between February and March that year. The first cheque, dated 1 June 2018, bounced due to insufficient funds. A second cheque, issued later, was also dishonoured after payment was stopped by the drawer.

Earlier this year, a judicial magistrate at Andheri had found Varma guilty under the Negotiable Instruments Act. On 21 January, the magistrate sentenced him to three months' imprisonment and ordered him to pay Rs 3,72,219 within three months.

Varma challenged the conviction in the Dindoshi sessions court. During the appeal hearing, both parties informed the court that they had decided to settle the dispute amicably. The complainant's lawyer, Rajesh Kumar Patel, confirmed that the company was supplying equipment to Varma's firm for several years and took legal action only after both cheques were dishonoured. *—PTI*

Builder-bank nexus: SC widens probe

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Supreme Court has allowed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to register six additional cases into the alleged "unholy nexus" between developers and banks that defrauded homebuyers in real estate projects outside Delhi-NCR, specifically in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mohali, and Prayagraj.

The CBI may now proceed with regular FIRs, searches, and seizures.

The court directed the CBI to share portions of its sealed report with amicus curiae Rajiv Jain. This follows the SC's earlier directive on 22 July allowing the CBI to register 22 cases against builders in Delhi-NCR, and granting six weeks to complete preliminary inquiries into projects outside NCR.

The cases stem from complaints by over 1,200 homebuyers who allege they were forced to pay EMIs despite not receiving possession of their flats under subvention schemes. Under these schemes, banks disbursed loans directly to builders, who were meant to pay EMIs until possession. Defaults by builders led banks to demand payments from homebuyers. The court earlier flagged a prima facie nexus between prominent banks, builders, and development authorities in NCR and other cities. Supertech Ltd was labelled the "main culprit," having received over Rs 5,157 crore in loans since 1998. Corporation Bank alone reportedly disbursed Rs 2,700 crore to builders via schemes. *—PTI*

ED QUIZZES YUVRAJ IN BETTING CASE

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Former cricketer Yuvraj Singh on Tuesday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in a money laundering case linked to the online betting app 1xBet.

Singh, 43, was questioned under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), along with influencer Anveshi Jain. Over the past weeks, the ED has also questioned former cricketers Suresh Raina, Shikhar Dhawan, Robin Uthappa, actors Mimi Chakraborty, Ankush Hazra, and will question Sonu Sood on Wednesday.

The probe examines celebrity endorsements, payments, and contracts, to check whether the funds constitute 'proceeds of crime.' India recently banned real-money online gaming.

The ED may attach assets of individuals involved, with a chargesheet to follow. The investigation is part of a wider crackdown on online betting. *—PTI*

ZUBEEN LAID TO REST

As Assam grieves Garg, miscreants shut shop & block NH

BARNALI HANDIQUE
GUWAHATI, 23 SEPT

What began as a tribute to Assam's beloved singer Zubeen Garg has spiralled into chaos, with some miscreants forcing shop closures, blocking roads, and even assaulting individuals. Across parts of the state, especially Guwahati and Upper Assam, mourning has turned into violence.

In Guwahati, some miscreants forced shops to shut, considering it a mark of respect to the late icon. However, this has begun to inconvenience the public. "We are waiting for markets to reopen as we're running out of groceries," said Nilesh Gohain, a resident of Dibrugarh. Traders' associations had called for shop closures across several districts in honour of Zubeen.

In Dibrugarh, shopkeeper Deepak Singh said he had kept his store closed since 19 September out of respect, though customers were calling in desperation. "Some youths were pressuring everyone to keep shutters down," he added. Reports of vandalism and even assault have emerged. "A shopkeeper was thrashed for trying to open his store," said Shamit Saha of Guwahati's Kalapahar, adding, "We all love Zubeen Da, but this violence is not the way."

In Jorhat, protesters blocked National Highway 37 on Tuesday morning, demanding that Zubeen's cremation take place in his hometown. The blockade caused massive traffic snarls, leaving trucks, buses, and reportedly even an ambulance, stranded. Local organisations had urged the government to bring his body to Jorhat for public homage. However, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma clarified that the singer's body was not in a condition to endure the six-hour journey. However, the government, on the wishes of Garg's family, decided on Kumarkuchi in Sonapur on the outskirts of Guwahati to be his final resting place.

Thousands gathered for the funeral, humming Garg's iconic song 'Mayabini' as he was laid to rest. To ensure peace, the government recorded the entire funeral procession from the Arjuna Bhogeswar Baruah Sports Complex in Sarusajai to Kumarkuchi and deployed security forces. The Jorhat Press Club condemned the highway blockade, stating that "true fans" would never resort to such actions. The club has called for a formal investigation into the disruptions during the state's three-day mourning period. *—Salar News*

Singer Zubeen Garg was cremated with full state honours at Kamarkuchi near Guwahati on Tuesday, as thousands gathered to bid him farewell. His sister Palme Borthakur and protégé Rahul Gautam lit the pyre, accompanied by Vedic chants and a gun salute **PHOTO: PTI**

200 fall ill after eating buckwheat flour in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Around 200 people are suspected to have suffered food poisoning after eating buckwheat flour (kuttu atta) during Navratri fasting in north-west Delhi, police said on Tuesday. Patients from Jahangirpuri, Mahendra Park, Samaypur, Bhalswa Dairy, Lal Bagh and Swaroop Nagar were taken to BJRM Hospital, where the chief medical officer confirmed that 150–200 people had attended the emergency ward since early morning. All were reported to be stable, with no serious cases.

Police received the first calls at Jahangirpuri station around 6.10am, warning that several residents had fallen ill after consuming food prepared with the flour. *—PTI*

ITALY FOR PALESTINE

Italian people protested nationwide and called a general strike on Monday against the attacks in Gaza and demanded that the government recognised a Palestinian state. In Milan (pic) and several other parts, demonstrators clashed with police authorities – some of whom deployed tear gas to control the crowds - as much of the country came to a standstill with major transport disruptions
PHOTO: PTI

What Nepal's Gen Z revolt means for India, China, US

In Nepal, millions of people are still reeling from an anti-corruption rebellion led by the country's urban youth, which ousted the government led by KP Sharma Oli earlier this month.

Oli's power collapsed within mere days — so quickly, in fact, that some Nepalese now speculate that protesters must have had help from abroad. A rare congratulatory message from religious leader Dalai Lama further fuelled the debate on social media.

Others affirm that the revolution was conducted by the Nepalese themselves.

"The Gen Z campaign is often compared to movements in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or Syria," Kathmandu-based journalist Devendra Bhattarai wrote in a recent column. "But it must not be forgotten that this is less the result of outside influence and more a revolution born and nurtured by Nepali leaders here."

Political scientist Sucheta Pyakurel said that the government's ouster was a "revolution of mass frustration" generated by lack of opportunities and cronyism.

A student crosses a barricade during a the 'Gen-Z protests' in Nepal's Kathmandu, which led to the toppling of ex-prime minister KP Sharma Oli earlier this month
PHOTO: PTI

INTERNATIONAL BALANCING ACT

Nepal, a Himalayan nation of nearly 30 million people wedged between India and China, has struggled with instability for many years.

Between the adoption of a new Constitution in 2015 and the latest deadly unrest, the country has seen eight governments centred around the same three leaders: Oli, of CPN-UML; Sher Bahadur Deuba, of Nepali Congress; and Pushpa Kamal Dahal, of CPN (Maoist-Centre).

Parts of Nepal's political scene, especially Left-leaning and pro-monarchy forces, have repeatedly claimed that foreign powers such as India, the US and the European Union are behind Nepal's frequent political shifts. China has only recently joined this line-up, as its traditional image of "quiet diplomacy" has waned.

Officially, Kathmandu pursues a "nonaligned foreign policy" — a principle established by King Prithvi, who united modern Nepal in 1768. A key element of this policy could be summed up as "friendship with all and enmity with none" to ensure diplomatic and developmental support from all sides, especially India and China.

Nepal also views the US as its "third neighbour" because of the America's global dominance. In turn, India, China and the US all have genuine stakes in Nepal and concerns regarding sudden shifts in the nation's politics.

Nepal and India enjoy deep cultural, economic and security ties. India also shares a 1,751-kilometer open border with the smaller country. Because of its geographic and cultural proximity, India experiences the immediate impact of instability in Nepal.

Similarly, Nepal shares northern border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region, and Beijing views instability in Nepal as a potential threat to Tibet's security.

China insists that Nepal uphold the "One China Policy" and prevent anti-China activities on its soil. Nepal repeatedly reaffirmed this principle, recognising Tibet, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as integral parts of China.

In 2017, Nepal joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with the vision of multidimensional trans-Himalayan networks connecting two countries, including railways, roads, and digital and energy links.

"Nepal's foreign policy is all about its efforts to maintain a delicate balance with all three regional and global powers," Chandra Dev Bhatta, a geopolitical analyst, said.

At the same time, Kathmandu also seeks to maintain ties with the US and its allies, including the EU, Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Recently, the US provided a $530 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) grant to scale up Nepal's energy grids and road infrastructure. The MCC is seen as the Western countermeasure to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

HOW CLOSE WAS OLI TO BEIJING?

In recent years, Nepal has moved close to China diplomatically and economically.

Analysts point to China's apparent preference for Nepal's Left-leaning parties — especially the Maoists and CPN-UML.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Kathmandu in October 2019, Left-leaning Prime Ministers and Presidents have repeatedly visited China. Just days before the outbreak of deadly protests in Nepal, then-Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli attended a military parade in Beijing marking the 80th anniversary of China's victory over Japan.

During this visit, Oli raised Nepal's concerns about the agreement between India and China to open up economic and pilgrimage routes through Lipulekh Pass, a territory Nepal has claimed historically. He also met Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Bhatta said the strategy of leaning on China was "uncommon.... Since our engagement is greater with India and the West, our strategic tilt toward China could be viewed unfavourably".

Japan was the first nation to congratulate the regime change, hinting at Tokyo's displeasure Oli. *—DW News*

SALAR

Does the genocide recognition matter in Gaza?

A growing number of experts, including those commissioned by a UN body, have said Israel's offensive in the Gaza Strip amounts to genocide, deepening Israel's isolation and risking untold damage to the country's standing even among allies.

The accusation is vehemently denied by Israel, which was established in part as a refuge for Jews after the Holocaust.

Others have rejected it or said only a court can make that determination.

Even so, global outrage over Israel's wartime conduct has mounted in recent months, as images of starving children emerged, adding to the humanitarian catastrophe of a 23-month war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and laid waste to much of Gaza.

But the genocide accusation goes further, raising the question of whether a state forged in the aftermath of the crime is now committing it.

WHAT IS A GENOCIDE?

Genocide was codified in a 1948 convention drawn up after the horrors of the Holocaust that defines it as acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

According to the convention, genocidal acts include: killing; causing serious bodily or mental harm; and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part.

WHO HAS CALLED GAZA A GENOCIDE?

In a report last week, a team of independent experts commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council concluded the war has become an attempt by Israel to destroy the Palestinian population in Gaza and constitutes genocide.

The group, which doesn't speak for the UN, said its determination was based on a pattern of behaviour, including Israel's "total siege" of Gaza, killing or wounding vast numbers of Palestinians, and the destruction of health and educational facilities.

Many of the world's leading experts on genocide have reached the same conclusion, with at least two dozen using the term publicly in the past year.

In December, Amnesty International used the term, citing similar findings as the UN-commissioned experts. Two weeks later, Human Rights Watch accused Israel of intentionally depriving Gaza of water, saying that amounted to "an act of genocide."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called Israel's conduct genocide this month. "This is not self-defence, it's not even an attack — it's the extermination of a defenceless people," he said.

Two internationally respected Israeli rights groups have also said it's genocide.

ISRAEL, US DENY

Israel — where the Holocaust plays a critical role in national identity — casts such allegations as an assault on its very legitimacy.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel could have committed genocide "in one afternoon" if it wanted, implying it has acted with restraint.

Yet, experts say there's no numerical threshold for the crime.

US President Donald Trump, similarly, said he didn't think he'd seen evidence to support the accusation.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres and others say it's not for politicians or scholars to make the determination, but for the International Criminal Court of Justice.

SOUTH AFRICA'S CASE IN THE ICJ

In late 2023, South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the UN's top court, the International Court of Justice. About a dozen countries have joined the case. A final ruling could take years.

To prove its case, South Africa must establish intent.

Lawyers for the country have already pointed to comments by Israeli leaders, including then-Defence Minister Yoav Gallant saying Israel was "fighting human animals," and Deputy Knesset Speaker Nissim Vaturi saying that Israelis shared the goal of "erasing the Gaza Strip from the face of the Earth."

Even if it rules for South Africa, the court has no way to stop any genocide or punish perpetrators. Only the UN Security Council can do that — including through sanctions or authorising military action. The US has a long history of using its veto power there to block resolutions against Israel.

The International Criminal Court, meanwhile, has issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, but neither faces genocide charges. They are accused of using starvation as a method of warfare, allegations they deny. *—PTI*

Palestinians flee northern Gaza Strip. Gaza's health ministry says over 65,000 people have been killed since 7 October
PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Zubeen Garg: A life larger than the music he made

His music captured the hearts and imagination of millions without any doubt, 'Ya Ali' may have catapulted him to national fame, but there was much more to singer Zubeen Garg's larger-than-life persona that made lakhs mourn him since Friday when he died in Singapore.

His 38,000 songs in 40 languages and dialects, numerous films he acted in and directed, and stage shows may have mesmerised people across generations, but it was his irreverent outbursts, often replete with common slangs, that resonated more with people and made him an icon among generations, irrespective of language, religion, community, caste or creed.

Zubeen ranted against the hypocrisy of established institutions, called a spade a spade which often led to controversies, made politically incorrect but honest statements on issues of the day, extended a helping hand to the poor and the troubled, passionately loved nature and animals—all these and many more of his personality traits locked in his frail frame of steel inspired millions and made them his ardent fans.

His antics on stage, often in an inebriated state, irked many who expected a proper behaviour from a popular artiste and the elder generation, used to the lilting socially relevant music of Bhupen Hazarika and other music legends of Assam, was initially hesitant to accept his music, which created a fresh, new and path-breaking trend.

Zubeen, however, marched on undeterred, cocking a snook at his critics, and went on to create music with lyrics that embodied passion, romance, beauty, loss, desolation, hope and much more, converting critics to admirers.

He took on the might of the proscribed outfit, ULFA, when he defied their diktat of not singing Hindi songs during Bihu functions, took on the traditional institution of 'Sattras' saying that the head of these Vaishnav monasteries should not be called 'Prabhu Ishwar' (Gods) as they, too, are mere human beings, asked present Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to give him a copyright fee for imitating his style of dancing on stage during election campaigns, was at the forefront of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and there are many more from Zubeen's repertoire that endeared him to the masses.

There was a section that tried to give a political colour to his singing for BJP during the last elections but he shut them up by saying that he had also sung for Congress on many occasions and "I am non-political. I am a singer, will sing for anyone who pays me".

The funereal procession for renowned singer Zubeen Garg, in Guwahati, Assam. He had a prolific career, spanning 38,000 songs across 40 languages and dialects
PHOTO: PTI

His well-wishers, on many occasions, requested him not to make controversial statements, but he said that he cannot stop himself from speaking what he feels, and his spontaneous- 'Ghenta, kakou khatir no koru' (Damn! I don't have to please anyone) struck a chord with the younger generation in search of an icon.

Zubeen's tender and emotional side came to the fore when he spoke about his deceased mother and younger sister, Jonki Borthakur, who died in a road accident while returning from a Bihu function, popular poet late Hiren Bhattacharya, his pet dogs and the many animals and birds he rescued, giving each a name with his surname attached to it.

It was these contradictions in him that led to the creation of music that touched the hearts of all, irrespective of social, economic, religious and political affiliations, with lakhs of people thronging the Arjun Bhogeswar Sports Complex here, where his body lay in state since Sunday after arriving from Singapore, where he died while swimming in the sea.

The 52-year old singer, music composer, film director and actor, named Jibon Borthakur by his family in his childhood, went on to become Zubeen Garg with his mother, inspired by the famed Zubin Mehta's music, calling him so but the Brahmin surname was discarded by the singer who claimed he was an atheist and believed in the "religion of humanity".

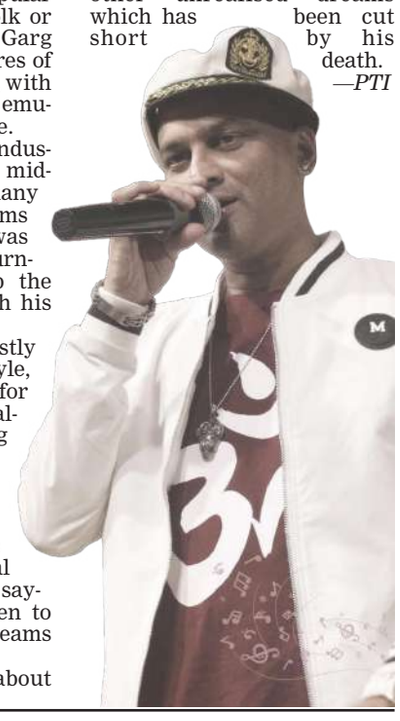
He began singing from the age of three and be it popular Assamese or western, folk or classical-based songs, Garg gave voice to varied genres of music and excelled in all, with most later year singers emulating his inimitable style.

The Bollywood music industry beckoned him in the mid-1990s and belted out many popular numbers in films and albums alike but was soon disenchanted, returning to Assam to climb the height of popularity with his numerous songs.

Zubeen's ill-health, mostly due to an erratic lifestyle, was a matter of concern for many, and he was hospitalised several times during the last few years.

His fans and well-wishers often admonished him to take care of his health but he always came out of the hospital with a smile on his face, saying, "nothing will happen to me, I still have many dreams to fulfil".

Zubeen often talked about the many songs he was yet to sing and compose, the films he wanted to make, write his autobiography titled 'Eucalyptus', about the house he was building overlooking the mighty River Brahmaputra, the many more people he wanted to help as their happiness brought a smile to his lips and several other unrealised dreams which has been cut short by his death. *—PTI*



Indian missing near Maldives after falling overboard

MALE, 23 SEPT

An Indian national went missing after falling overboard from an Indian-flagged cargo vessel near the Maldives. According to local media, the incident occurred late on 22 September when a crew member of the MSV Daulah fell into the sea about one kilometre north of Vilimale. The Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) said it received the alert around 11.35pm and immediately deployed the Coastguard's Second Squadron under the Male' Area Command. Despite overnight sea and air searches, the missing sailor had not been found as of early Tuesday morning. MNDF said the search operation is underway. ***—PTI***

Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah freed after 12 years

CAIRO, 23 SEPT

Pro-democracy Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah was released on 22 September after nearly 12 years of imprisonment, his campaign announced. He was granted a presidential pardon along with five other prisoners after the National Council for Human Rights urged President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to act on humanitarian grounds. El-Fattah, a leading voice in Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring uprising, was first jailed in 2014 for joining an unauthorised protest and allegedly assaulting a police officer. Briefly freed in 2019, he was detained again during a security crackdown. His prolonged imprisonment became a symbol of Egypt's shrinking democratic space. ***—PTI***

Drone attack kills 8 kids, 7 others in Haiti slum

HAITI, 23 SEPT

A drone attack in a gang-controlled slum in Haiti's capital has killed at least eight children, leaving six others injured. The explosive drones reportedly targeted a suspected gang leader in Cité Soleil, a eo-colonial controlled by the powerful Viv Ansanm coalition. Relatives and human rights activists have accused the police of being responsible for the attack. The leader of the Viv Ansanm gang, Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier, has vowed to avenge the attack. According to a human rights group, the incident also killed three civilians and four suspected gang members, raising "urgent questions of accountability" for the authorities. ***—PTI***

Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger pull out of 'imperialist' ICC

BAMAKO, 23 SEPT

Ruling military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger said the three countries are withdrawing from the International Criminal Court, accusing the global tribunal of what they say is selective justice. The pullout was not unexpected in the wake of the coups that brought the juntas to power in the three western African countries. Since the coups, the three countries' military leaders abandoned long-time partners, including the West and the West Africa regional bloc. They have established new alliances, mainly with Russia, whose President Vladimir Putin faces an arrest warrant by the ICC over Russia's war in Ukraine. In a joint statement on Monday, the three said the ICC has become an "instrument of neocolonial repression in the hands of imperialism". ***—PTI***

Taking paracetamol when pregnant causes autism: Don

WASHINGTON, 22 SEPT

President Donald Trump suggested Monday that the use of Tylenol during pregnancy may contribute to rising autism rates in the US, something experts have studied and say is unproven.

Speaking Monday from the White House, the President said women should not take acetaminophen, also known by the brand name Tylenol (or paracetamol in several parts of the world) , "during the entire pregnancy." He also raised unfounded concerns about vaccines.

"If you can't tough it out, if you can't do it, that's what you're gonna have to do. You'll take a Tylenol, but it'll be very sparingly ... I think you shouldn't take it," he said.

Trump suggested that the Amish community – a Christian group known for living a traditional life separate from modern practices – "has essentially no autism".

The Trump administration has been under immense pressure from Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr.'s diverse Make America Healthy Again movement to provide answers on the causes of the marked increase in autism cases in the US in recent years.

Experts say the rise in cases is mainly due to a new definition for the disorder that now includes mild cases on a "spectrum" and better diagnoses. They say there is no single cause to the disorder and say the rhetoric appears to ignore and undermine decades of science into the genetic and environmental factors that can play a role.

However, Trump suggested that autism is artificially induced and said that even children shouldn't take it either.

—Salar news with agencies

UN is full of empty words: Trump blasts Assembly

'Europe is going to hell; London Mayor wants Sharia law'

Donald Trump ***PHOTO: PTI***

NEW YORK, 23 SEPT

Standing in front of top UN officials, before more than 150 world leaders, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday blasted for being filled with "empty words".

He said they didn't reach out to him on the various wars he says he has brought to a conclusion.

"I've always said the UN has such tremendous, tremendous potential. But it's not even coming close to living up to that potential," Trump said. "For the most part, at least for now, all they seem to do is write a really strongly worded letter and then never follow that letter. It's empty words and empty words don't solve wars."

He added later that the US is "the best country on Earth to do business" and claimed the economy now is "bigger and even better" than during his first term.

He also blasted European countries such as Germany, Greece and Switzerland for an "open border experiment".

"Your countries are going to hell. In America, we've taken bold action to swiftly shut down uncontrolled migration once we started detaining and deporting everyone who crossed the border and removing illegal aliens from the US, they simply stopped coming," he said.

He claimed that London's Mayor Sadiq Khan – who is Muslim – has been trying to institute Sharia law.

Trump also claimed hailed US' military strikes on alleged drug smuggling ships in the Caribbean, while calling for an end to the Gaza war.

"We have to stop the war in Gaza immediately", he said, omitting the humanitarian crisis. "We've got to get the hostages back. We want all 20 back."

He rubbished the move to recognise a Palestinian State. "The rewards would be too great for Hamas terrorists. This would be a reward for these horrible atrocities, including 7 Oct."

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, he said he thought his friendship with Vladimir Putin would have helped end it, but he was proven wrong. Simultaneously, he scolded his European allies. "You're much closer to the city. We have an ocean in between. You're right there, and Europe has to step it up. They can't be doing what they're doing. They're buying oil and gas from Russia," he said.

—Salar News with agencies

'RIGHT, NOT A REWARD'

France recognises Palestinian statehood at UN

UNITED NATIONS, 22 SEPT

As the Gaza war rages on, France recognised Palestinian statehood on Monday at the start of a high-profile meeting at the United Nations aimed at galvanizing support for a two-state solution. More nations are expected to follow, in defiance of Israel and the US.

French President Emmanuel Macron's announcement in the UN General Assembly hall received loud applause from the more than 140 leaders in attendance. The Palestinian delegation, including its UN ambassador, Riyad Mansour, could be seen standing and applauding as the declaration was made. Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President, was seen applauding on a live-camera view after the US government banned him from attending the UN gathering in person.

"True to the historic commitment of my country to the Middle East, to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, this is why I declare that today, France recognises the state of Palestine," Macron said.

The meeting and expanded recognition of Palestinian statehood are expected to have little, if any, impact on the ground.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said "statehood for the Palestinians is a right, not a reward."

Abbas meanwhile, asked Hamas to surrender their weapons, saying that "Hamas will have no role in governing" Palestine. *—Agencies*

Unidentified drone disrupts Copenhagen, Oslo airports

COPENHAGEN, 23 SEPT

A skilled drone pilot operated two to three large unidentified drones over Copenhagen and Oslo airports on Monday night, causing significant disruptions as airspace was shut down for hours. The police described the pilot as "a capable actor" suggesting the intent was to showcase their skills rather than cause harm, as the drones engaged in various flight patterns with their lights turning on and off.

Senior police inspector Jes Jespersen noted, "It all indicates that you are not out to attack anyone, but you are out to show off and maybe to practice." Investigators are exploring how the drones arrived at the airport, considering the potential for a Russian hybrid attack, given the strategic location.

Flights resumed early Tuesday, although delays and cancellations persisted. Copenhagen Airport advised passengers, "Passengers are advised to check with their airline for further information."

The drone over Copenhagen Airport on Monday ***PHOTO: X***

In a related incident, a drone event at Oslo Airport prompted traffic to be rerouted to one runway. While officials are investigating potential connections, Jespersen stated that nothing immediately links them. *—PTI*

China's Guangdong province on alert as Typhoon Ragasa nears

BEIJING, 23 SEPT

Guangdong province, China's manufacturing hub, has raised its emergency response to the highest level as super Typhoon Ragasa is set to make landfall along its central or western coast. The typhoon entered the South China Sea late on Monday and is projected to move northwest at approximately 20kmph, hitting coastal areas from Zhuhai City to Xuwen County on Wednesday, with winds of 40 to 55 metres per second, according to the provincial meteorological observatory.

Over ten cities, including Shenzhen, have closed markets, schools, factories, and transport systems, urging residents to stay indoors and stock up on essentials. Shenzhen's airport and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge have been shut since Monday, with Guangzhou cancelling flights until Wednesday evening.

Giant sculptures near the waves ahead of Super Typhoon Ragasa in Shenzhen in southern China's Guangdong province ***PHOTO: PTI***

Residents have been hoarding food and water as online grocery shops report shortages. Despite empty supermarket shelves, the Shenzhen government plans to deliver an additional 7,000 tonnes of vegetables to replenish supplies. The provincial flood and wind control headquarters have instructed localities to adhere to stringent measures while suspending classes, work, and business operations in major affected areas. *—PTI*

Had to prevent Biden's 2nd term: Kamala

WASHINGTON, 23 SEPT

Kamala Harris said Monday evening that she regrets not expressing her concerns about president Joe Biden running for a second term when a majority of Americans felt he was too old for the job. "I have and had a certain responsibility that I should have followed through on," Harris told Rachel Maddow on MSNBC in her first live television interview since the election.

The Democratic former vice president's comments expand on a passage in her book, '107 Days,' that looks back on her experience replacing Biden as the 2024 Democratic Presidential nominee after he dropped out of the race. Harris ultimately lost to Republican candidate Donald Trump.

"Was it grace, or was it recklessness? In retrospect, I think it was recklessness," she wrote. "The stakes were simply too high. This wasn't a choice that should have been left to an individual's ego, an individual's ambition. It should have been more than a personal decision."

In her interview with Maddow, Harris said, "when I talk about the recklessness... I'm talking about myself." *—PTI*

HAMAS PUBLICLY EXECUTES 3 ISRAELI 'SPIES'

JERUSALEM, 23 SEPT

Hamas gunmen publicly executed at least three Palestinians in Gaza on Sunday for "collaborating" with Israel.

Videos circulated on social media purports to show the masked gunmen warning "all collaborators " before shooting the trio in front of a crowd.

Reports suggest that this happened in Gaza City, where Israel has launched a massive ground invasion.

The executions aimed to send "a clear message and serve as a deterrent to anyone tempted to collaborate with the occupation". *—PTI*

29 people were killed in Gaza as Israel heightened its invasion

The video circulated online purports to show masked Hamas members executing three people in what appears to be Gaza City ***PHOTO: X***

Ukrainian drone strikes disrupt Moscow air traffic

MOSCOW, 23 SEPT

A series of Ukrainian drone strikes targeted the Russian capital overnight, leading to significant disruptions at major airports, as reported by Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin's portal. Authorities confirmed that 36 drones were intercepted in and around Moscow since Monday evening.

Loud explosions were heard near the PTI office in southwest Moscow around 7pm local time, with state-run agency TASS indicating that over 200 flights faced cancellations or delays due to the attacks. Specifically, at Sheremetyevo International Airport, 71 flights were delayed and 96 cancelled by 10.00am Moscow time.

In Domodedovo, four flights were delayed and two cancelled, while Vnukovo reported 40 delayed flights and five rerouted to regional airports.

Sobyanin stated that there were no reported casualties and rescue services were checking areas where drone debris fell.

In Reutov, a drone struck a parking lot, damaging four cars.

This marks the largest drone strike on Moscow since May. *—PTI*

DRAMATIC TURNAROUND

Kimmel to come back on air after suspension

NEW YORK, 22 SEPT

ABC will reinstate Jimmy Kimmel's late night show in the wake of criticism over his comments about the assassination of Conservative activist Charlie Kirk, officials with the network said Monday.

"We have spent the last days having thoughtful conversations with Jimmy, and after those conversations, we reached the decision to return the show on Tuesday," said a statement from the network, owned by Disney.

Kimmel has hosted 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' on ABC since 2003 and has been a fixture in television and comedy for even longer. He is also well known as a presenter, having hosted the Academy Awards four times.

However, ABC suspended Kimmel indefinitely after comments he made about Kirk, who was killed 10 Sept. Kimmel said "many in MAGA land are working very hard to capitalise on the murder of Charlie Kirk" and that "the MAGA gang" was "desperately trying to characterise this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them."

Backlash to Kimmel's comments about Kirk was swift. Nexstar and Sinclair, two of ABC's largest affiliate owners, said they would be pulling 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' from their stations. Others, including several fellow comedians, came to his defence.

President Donald Trump, one of Kimmel's frequent targets, posted on social media that Kimmel's suspension was "great news for America." He also called for other late night hosts to be fired. Trump did not address Kimmel's reinstatement when asked about it on Monday.

Kimmel's contract with ABC had been set to expire in May 2026. *—Agencies*

UAE suspends visas for nine countries

ABU DHABI, 23 SEPT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced a temporary suspension on the issuance of tourist and work visas for citizens from nine countries, effective immediately. This measure forms part of the UAE's broader visa policies aimed at 2026. Nationals from Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Sudan, and Uganda will be unable to apply for new UAE tourist visas or work permits.

While those holding valid UAE visas are unaffected, the ban has significant implications for tourism, business, and expatriates.

Experts believe it is primarily driven by concerns over terrorism, diplomatic tensions, and pandemic-related travel safety measures.

"These destinations are in high demand thanks to the diversity, convenience of transport, and visa absence," noted Dmitry Arutyunov, co-chair of the Union's committee for outbound tourism, referencing a shift towards visa-free alternatives like Turkey and other Asian regions. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: ANI

Uber & rlys team up at Howrah and Ahmedabad

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Uber has formed a partnership with Indian Railways at Ahmedabad and Howrah stations, enhancing its integration into major transport hubs. This initiative aims to improve passenger connectivity and aligns with Uber's commitment to fostering multimodal mobility. An Uber official stated, "Our exclusive collaboration... is a step forward in strengthening urban mobility infrastructure and ensuring reliable connectivity for millions of travellers." Ahmedabad Railway Station currently accommodates over 120,000 passengers daily, expected to grow to over 300,000 by 2053, while Howrah serves more than one million. The partnership marks Uber's first managed operations at railway stations in India, featuring dedicated parking for seamless access. —*PTI*

GST cut: Centre monitoring e-comm prices

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Centre is monitoring whether the GST rate cut benefits on FMCG items are being passed on by e-commerce platforms, government sources said on Tuesday. Amid complaints of not commensurate price reduction of daily essential items being sold on some e-commerce platforms, sources said the field formations are monitoring the price changes. "We are monitoring the price changes. Field formations are monitoring, and we will get the first report from them by 30 September," a source said.Effective 22 September, Goods and Services Tax (GST) has become a two-tier structure of 5 and 18 per cent. —*PTI*

Infosys extends collab with Swiss telco Sunrise

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

IT major Infosys on Tuesday announced the expansion of its strategic long-term collaboration with Switzerland's telecom firm Sunrise to accelerate IT transformation and harness the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in business operations. Infosys will utilise its strengths in artificial intelligence, analytics, and data, along with its AI platform Infosys Topaz to assist Sunrise in becoming an AI-driven enterprise, and enabling it to create new business propositions by increasing operational speed, efficiency, and quality through data-driven insights and intelligent automation, Infosys said in a regulatory filing. The Infosys scrip settled 0.16 per cent lower at Rs 1,497.75 apiece on BSE. —*PTI*

Stock markets decline for 3rd straight session

This comes amid FII outflows and H-1B visa concerns

MUMBAI, 23 SEPT:

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty declined for the third consecutive day on Tuesday in a volatile trade, dragged by selling in IT and blue-chip private banking shares and foreign fund outflows amid concerns over the steep hike in US H-1B visa fees. After oscillating between gains and losses during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 57.87 points or 0.07 per cent at 82,102.10. During the day, it hit a high of 82,370.38 and a low of 81,776.53, fluctuating by 593.85 points. The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 32.85 points or 0.13 per cent to 25,169.50.

Among Sensex firms, Trent, Tech Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, Eternal and ITC were the major laggards. Selling in HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank also dragged the key indices.

However, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Maruti and State Bank of India were among the gainers. "The domestic equity market traded rangebound and ended flat, indicating continuation of the consolidation. Broader sentiment stayed cautious, with small- and mid-cap stocks lagging the benchmarks," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Sector-wise, autos, metals, and financials gained on signs of robust festive demand post-GST cuts, while FMCG and realty stocks came under pressure from profit booking, Nair added. The BSE small cap gauge dipped 0.35 per cent while midcap index declined 0.29 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG dropped the most by 1.28 per cent, followed by realty (0.89 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.72 per cent), consumer durables (0.66 per cent), tech (0.63 per cent) and IT (0.63 per cent). Metal, banks, auto, financial services and telecommunication were the gainers.

Meanwhile, the rupee slumped by 52 paise to hit an all-time low of 88.82 against the US dollar in intra-day trade on Tuesday amid sustained outflow of foreign funds. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.45 per cent to USD 66.87 a barrel.

On Monday, the Sensex dropped 466.26 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 82,159.97. The Nifty declined 124.70 points or 0.49 per cent to 25,202.35. —*PTI*

Trade was dragged by selling in IT and blue-chip private banking shares and foreign fund outflows amid concerns over H-1B visa fees **PHOTO: AI**

INDIA'S SERVICE EXPORT HIT

H-1B firewall expands US protectionism against India: Report

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT:

The latest move by US President Donald Trump to revise the H-1B visa fee to USD 100,000 has expanded protectionist barriers against India.

According to a report by Systematix Research, Trump's decision extends his anti-India trade offensives beyond the merchandise trade deficit and poses a fresh threat to India's USD 190 billion services export industry.

It stated "Trump's H-1B Firewall Expands US Protectionism Against India.....escalate US protectionism, targeting India's IT sector and threatening its USD 190 billion services export industry."

The research noted that the Trump administration's new H-1B visa restrictions, imposing a steep USD 100,000 fee, risk reshaping US-India economic ties and India's macro-financial stability. This comes at a time when trade relations between the two countries are already strained.

The White House has defended the move, arguing that the H-1B visa has led to wage suppression and job displacement for Americans. It cited data showing that the number of foreign STEM workers in the US more than doubled from 1.2 million in 2000 to nearly 2.5 million in 2019, while STEM employment grew only 44.5 per cent.

The report also said that Trump administration has adopted hot-and-cold tactics in its engagement with India. Earlier, the US had maintained a 25 per cent import tariff on Indian goods along with a 25 per cent penalty on Russian oil imports.

These measures had pushed India closer toward the China-Russia axis. At one stage, conciliatory signals from Washington hinted at moderation in trade tensions with PM Modi and Trump have exchange good greetings on social media, but the latest offensive on H-1B visas has again soured prospects, the report noted.

Extending such non-tariff barriers to services broadens uncertainty in bilateral ties and adds friction in trade. —*ANI*

Rupee hits all-time low of 88.76 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 23 SEPT

The rupee depreciated 47 paise to hit an all-time low of 88.76 against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid sustained outflow of foreign funds on the back of a steep hike in US H-1B visa fee that is expected to give a big blow to Indian IT services exports.

Forex traders said the rupee dwindled towards record low levels as market participants analysed the likely repercussions of the new USD 100,000 H-1B visa levy, which could precipitate a slowdown in remittance growth and curtail service exports to the US.

Moreover, risk aversion in domestic markets may also pressurise the rupee, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 88.41, then lost further ground and touched an all-time intraday low of 88.82 against the US dollar, and finally settled for the day at 88.76, registering a decline of 47 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee depreciated by 12 paise to close at 88.28 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to remain weak as the US visa fee hike issue may continue to dampen domestic market sentiments and may result in foreign outflows. However, overall weakness in global crude oil prices may support the domestic currency," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Currency and Commodities, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Choudhary further noted that any intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may support the rupee at lower levels.

"Traders may take cues from PMI and current account balance data from the US. Traders may also take cues from US President Donald Trump and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 88.45 to 89.20.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent lower at 97.28. —*PTI*

PHOTO: AI

- Forex traders said the rupee dwindled towards record low levels as market participants analysed the likely repercussions of the new USD 100,000 H-1B visa levy, which could precipitate a slowdown in remittance growth

Swiggy to sell Rapido shares for Rs 431.5 crore

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

On-demand convenience firm Swiggy Ltd on Tuesday said it will divest nearly 36,000 compulsorily convertible preference shares held by it in bike taxi aggregator Rapido to Westbridge for nearly Rs 431.5 crore.

The board of directors of the company, at their meeting held on September 23, 2025, have approved the proposal for sale of 35,958 Series D Compulsorily Convertible Preference Shares (CCPS) held by it in Roppen Transportation Services Pvt Ltd (Rapido) to Setu AIF Trust, a fund registered under the SEBI, and/or its affiliates (Westbridge), Swiggy Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

A share purchase agreement (SPA) will be executed by Swiggy Ltd with Setu AIF Trust and/or its affiliates (Westbridge), it added.

It will divest 35,958 CCPS held by in Rapido to Westbridge for nearly Rs 431.5 crore on the terms and conditions specified in the SPA, it added. —PTI

Navratri sales drive auto stocks up

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Auto stocks closed higher on 23 September as strong festive demand on the first day of Navratri lifted investor sentiment, aided by price cuts following the rollout of the revised Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime.The new lower GST rates, which took effect on Monday, have reduced prices across hundreds of consumer products, including passenger vehicles.

Carmakers reported brisk business as customers rushed to showrooms. Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor India recorded exceptional sales, while Tata Motors said its dealers retailed around 10,000 vehicles on the first day of the festival and received more than 25,000 enquiries. Analysts said the upbeat response signalled robust festive sentiment, with autos, metals and financials among the strongest sectors. The positive trend stood out against a subdued broader market. —*PTI*

EPFO sees 5.55% rise in net members in July 2025

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) added 2.1 million net members in July 2025, marking a 5.55 per cent year-on-year growth, as per the latest payroll data released on Tuesday. The report highlighted approximately 979,000 new subscribers joining EPFO, driven by increasing employment opportunities and enhanced awareness of employee benefits through successful outreach programmes.

Notably, 598,000 new subscribers in the 18-25 age group represented a significant 61.06 per cent of all new subscribers. The net payroll addition for this age cohort reached around 913,000, reflecting a 4.09 per cent increase compared to July 2024.

Approximately 1.64 million former members returned to EPFO, representing a 12.12 per cent year-on-year increase, indicating a shift towards long-term financial security.

Maharashtra led the states by contributing 20.47 per cent to the net payroll followed by Karnataka. —*PTI*

Gold shines at record Rs 1.18 lakh

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Gold prices have surged to an unprecedented high, with 10 grams of 99.9 per cent purity gold reaching Rs 1,18,700 in the national capital. This significant jump of Rs 2,700 is being driven by a combination of strong global demand for the precious metal as a safe-haven asset and the Indian rupee hitting a new record low.

The rupee's value has been hit by a recent hike in US H-1B visa fees, a move that is expected to negatively impact India's IT services exports. This has triggered a sustained outflow of foreign funds, causing the rupee to provisionally depreciate by 47 paise. A weaker rupee makes gold imports more expensive, which, in turn, fuels its price increase in the domestic market.

The rally is not confined to gold. Silver prices have also seen a dramatic increase, rocketing by Rs 3,220 to touch a new peak of Rs 1,39,600 per kilogram.

Internationally, the trend is similar, with spot gold climbing over 1 per cent to reach a record high of USD 3,791.10 per ounce. This synchronised surge in precious metals underscores a broader investor sentiment of caution amid global economic uncertainty. The gold price rise reflects how geopolitical and economic events are impacting financial markets across the world. —*PTI*

TROUBLED JAGUAR

JLR's post-hack shutdown extended

LONDON, 23 SEPT

Tata Motors owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) on Tuesday announced a further extension of its ongoing production shutdown until 1 October, as the company continues to deal with the fallout of a cyber hack since the start of this month.

The British luxury carmaker's factories in Merseyside, north-west England, and Solihull in the West Midlands as well as facilities around the world, including India, Slovakia and China, remain at a standstill after an IT network shutdown. In a latest company update, JLR said its latest announcement was intended to give clarity to its staff and suppliers.

"Today we have informed colleagues, suppliers and partners that we have extended the current pause in production until Wednesday, 1 October, 2025, following the cyber incident," the JLR statement said.

The company said its focus is on supporting its customers, suppliers and colleagues, as well as the car retailers – who remain open.

The production shutdown, nearing a month, is expected to cost JLR tens of millions of pounds a day in lost revenue and have raised major concerns for the companies and jobs in the supply chain.

More than 33,000 people are directly employed with JLR in the UK, across assembly lines at its factories, with an estimated 200,000 employed by hundreds of companies in the supply chain.

UK Industry minister Chris McDonald said he and Business Secretary Peter Kyle will "host companies in the supply chain, to listen to workers and hear how we can support them and help get production back online".

Trade union workers have since appealed to the government to step in with financial support, including a furlough scheme, while the company and its supply chain cope with the extended production pause.

A group calling itself Scattered Lapsus$ Hunters is believed to have claimed responsibility for the hack. It was also behind a number of high-profile attacks on UK retailers this year, including Marks & Spencer and Co-op. —*PTI*

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Purple Style Labs aims to garner Rs 660 cr via IPO

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Purple Style Labs, the parent firm of luxury fashion platform Pernia's Pop-Up Shop, has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 660 crore through an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO is entirely a fresh issue of equity shares with no offer for sale (OFS) component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Monday.

The Mumbai-based company is looking to garner Rs 130 crore in a pre-IPO placement round. If this is undertaken, the fresh issue size would be reduced accordingly.

The company plans to use IPO proceeds to the tune of Rs 363.3 crore to invest in its wholly-owned subsidiary, PSL Retail, for lease liabilities related to experience centres and back-end offices in India; Rs 128 crore will be deployed for sales and marketing, and the rest will go towards general corporate purposes.

With a portfolio of around 2.12 SKUs across women's wear, men's wear, fine jewellery, fashion jewellery, kids wear and accessories, Purple Style Labs curates products from over 1,312 active designer brands.

Purple Style Labs catered for customers from more than 100 countries in FY25 through its online channels and flagship experience centre in the UK. Also, it has built a significant foothold in markets such as the US, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

- The company plans to use IPO proceeds to the tune of Rs 363.3 crore to invest in its wholly-owned subsidiary, PSL Retail, for lease liabilities related to experience centres and back-end offices

Rocket secures $15M seed funding led by Salesforce

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Rocket, an AI-driven app-building platform, announced on Tuesday that it has successfully raised USD 15 million (approximately Rs 133 crore) in seed funding, with support from Salesforce Ventures and Accel. The funds will be channelled into global expansion.

The Surat-based startup said the capital will be used to strengthen research and development and broaden international presence. Rocket plans to establish a North American headquarters in Palo Alto, California, while also looking to expand its engineering and product teams in India, with ambitions to double its workforce in 12 to 15 months.

"The new funding... will help us continue to build our product capabilities, especially as we expand into new markets and use our new office in Palo Alto as a gateway to Silicon Valley's enterprise ecosystem, where we continue to see huge demand for application-building solutions that can scale natively with AI," said Deepak Dhanak, Co-founder. —*PTI*

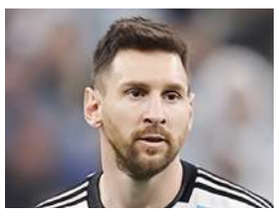


PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Messi & Argentina team to play in Kerala in Nov

T'PURAM, 23 SEPT

The Argentina national football team, featuring star forward Lionel Messi, is set to play a friendly match against Australia in Kochi this November, official sources confirmed. While the exact date is yet to be announced, the match is expected to take place between 12 and 18 November. The state's Sports Department confirmed the high-profile visit, dispelling earlier uncertainty surrounding the trip. Fans in Kerala, known for their passionate following of football, have eagerly awaited the 2022 World Cup champions' visit. The friendly is expected to be a landmark event for the state, drawing large crowds and nationwide attention. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Harris ruled out of World Cup with injury

BENGALURU, 23 SEPT

Australia all-rounder Grace Harris has been ruled out of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 due to a calf strain, sustained while fielding in the final ODI against India in Delhi on Saturday. The injury is a setback for the defending champions' title defence, adding to ongoing fitness concerns. Western Australia all-rounder Heather Graham has been named as Harris's replacement. Although Harris was not a guaranteed starter, her absence is significant as players like Phoebe Litchfield and Darcie Brown also face injury issues. Graham, who has played a handful of internationals, brings a fast-bowling option to the squad ahead of the tournament, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from 30 September. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Dinesh Karthik named captain for Hong Kong Sixes

HONG KONG, 23 SEPT

Former India player Dinesh Karthik has been appointed captain of the national team for the upcoming Hong Kong Sixes tournament, starting on 7 November. Known for his experience and explosive batting, Karthik's leadership is expected to boost the team's competitive edge. Expressing his excitement, Karthik said he looked forward to leading a squad of accomplished players and aimed to deliver fearless, entertaining cricket for the fans. Burji Shroff, chairperson of Cricket Hong Kong, welcomed the appointment, noting that Karthik's experience and leadership would add immense value to the tournament and attract cricket enthusiasts worldwide to the six-a-side festival. *—PTI*

Ballon d'Or: Dembele wins, Aitana makes history

Dembele helped PSG win; Aitana bags third Ballon d'Or

PARIS, 23 SEPT

Ousmane Dembele won the 2025 Ballon d'Or for his crucial role in Paris Saint-Germain's (PSG) historic season, which saw the club win its first Champions League title.

The French forward, who scored 35 goals and provided 16 assists across all competitions, became the sixth Frenchman to win the award, following Raymond Kopa, Michel Platini, Jean-Pierre Papin, Zinedine Zidane, and Karim Benzema.

Dembele's season was a remarkable turnaround. Once sidelined by PSG coach Luis Enrique for disciplinary reasons, he after being repositioned as a No. 9, emerged as both a scoring machine and a key contributor to the team's pressing and defensive efforts.

Aitana Bonmatí is the third player to bag three awards; Ousmane Dembele helped PSG win its 1st Champions League title *PHOTO: X/ BALLON D'OR*

PSG star celebrates Ballon d'Or

In the Champions League, he scored 8 goals and assisted 6 in 15 appearances, playing a crucial role in PSG's 5-0 final win over Inter Milan. Emotional during the ceremony at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Dembele asked his mother to join him on stage, saying, "It's incredible to win a trophy like this... To then be rewarded with the Ballon d'Or is truly exceptional."

In the women's category, Aitana Bonmatí secured her third consecutive Ballon d'Or Feminin, joining Michel Platini (1983–85) and Lionel Messi (2009–12) as the only players to win three in a row. Bonmatí finished ahead of Spain teammate Mariona Caldentey, despite Barcelona losing to Arsenal in the UEFA Women's Champions League final. She also won a domestic treble with Barcelona and was named the best player of EURO 2025, even after being hospitalised by viral meningitis just days before the tournament.

Other major awards went to Lamine Yamal, who claimed the Men's Kopa Trophy, and Vicky López, winner of the Women's Kopa Trophy. PSG's goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma received the Men's Yashin Award, while Hannah Hampton took the women's equivalent. Top scorers, recognised with the Gerd Müller Trophies, were Barcelona's Ewa Pajor and Arsenal's Viktor Gyokeres.

The 2025 Ballon d'Or ceremony celebrated not only individual brilliance but also club and national team achievements, highlighting PSG and Barcelona's dominance and the growing global recognition of football excellence. *—PTI*

INDIA VS B'DESH

Asia Cup: Another charged battle with 'spin punch'

DUBAI, 23 SEPT

Having overpowered Pakistan in an intense tussle, a battle-hardened Indian team will square off in another potentially volatile Asia Cup Super 4 game against Bangladesh on Wednesday when it is expected to encounter some quality spinners.

In terms of statistics, this is supposed to be another lopsided one as Bangladesh have won only once in 17 head-to-head encounters between the two teams in the T20 format.

But since the 2015 ODI World Cup and a benefit of doubt life to Rohit Sharma at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, it has gotten bitter between the two teams, thanks to the partisan young fans, many of whom perceive India as an adversary.

India's diplomatic relations with Bangladesh after the toppling of the Sheikh Hasina Government have been rocky.

The BCCI even postponed a white-ball series, which was scheduled in August this year, to 2026 provided there is a democratically elected government in place.

On paper, Bangladesh are no match for India. T20Is aren't even Bangladesh's strength and if all goes well, it could be another thumping win for Suryakumar Yadav's men.

Bangladesh have won only once in 17 head-to-head encounters with India in the T20 format *PHOTO: PTI*

But the fickle nature of the format and the slightly better spin attack of Bangladesh means they could spring a surprise.

However, it is the gulf in standard of batters across two sides that is ultimately going to be the difference.

In the Indian team, one opener Abhishek Sharma is in the form of his life, scoring runs at a strike rate of nearly 210, while his partner in crime Shubman Gill has propped up his to nearly 158 rate after the last Pakistan game.

In comparison, Bangladesh's two best T20 batters -- skipper Litton Das (129 plus) and Towhid Hridoy (SR 124 plus) have mediocre numbers to show for their efforts. *—PTI*

Today Mach

India

vs

BANGLADESH

Match starts at

8.00 pm IST

PR Sreejesh aims for a senior coach role in next 5 yrs

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

Legendary goalkeeper PR Sreejesh has set his sights on becoming the chief coach of the senior national hockey team within the next five years, as he continues to hone his coaching skills with the junior men's team.

"Coaching is new to me. I played hockey for 25 years. So juniors is the right place for me to learn. I don't havet h e patience for the sub-junior level where you need to teach basics," Sreejesh stated in an exclusive interview with PTI. He emphasised the need for maturity, saying, "I need that maturity of becoming a senior coach. I can't suddenly jump into that. But definitely that's a future target."

With a focus on refining skills, Sreejesh views the Sultan of Johor Cup, taking place from 11 to 19 October, as a critical preparatory event. He has also encouraged junior players to read influential books, like "Relentless," co-authored by Tim S Grover, to instill a mindset of passion and hard work. Regarding the HIL mini auction, he mentioned the retention of most players, indicating, "We just need three players in the men's team and for the women's team we need eight." *—PTI*

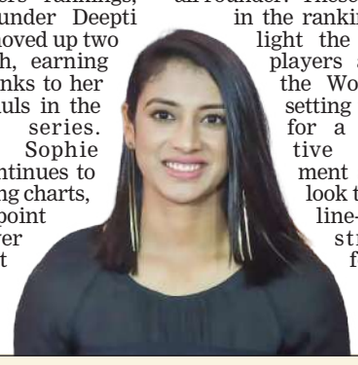
ICC WOMEN'S ODI RANKING

Mandhana retains top spot ahead of World Cup

DUBAI, 23 SEPT

India's Smriti Mandhana has maintained her position as the top-ranked batter in the ICC Women's ODI rankings, reaching a career-high rating of 818 following her stellar performances against Australia. Mandhana's two centuries in the recently concluded three-match series solidified her dominance, reinforcing her status as a key player for India ahead of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, starting on 30 September.

In the bowlers' rankings, Indian all-rounder Deepti Sharma has moved up two places to fifth, earning 651 points thanks to her two-wicket hauls in the Australia series. England's Sophie Ecclestone continues to lead the bowling charts, holding an 85-point advantage over her nearest competitors.



South Africa's Tazmin Brits was the biggest gainer in the batting rankings, rising 15 spots to sixth after scoring consecutive unbeaten centuries against Pakistan. Pakistan's Sidra Amin also advanced ten places to 13th, reflecting her strong series.

The all-rounder rankings have seen South Africa's Marizanne Kapp move past Hayley Matthews to claim second place, following a century and two-wicket haul in successive matches. Australia's Ash Gardner remains top-ranked all-rounder. These changes in the rankings highlight the form of players ahead of the World Cup, setting the stage for a competitive tournament as teams look to finalise line-ups and strategies for the stage. *—PTI*

India penalised for slow over-rate in third WODI

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Indian women's cricket team has been fined 10 per cent of its match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate during the third ODI against Australia at the Feroz Shah Kotla on Saturday. Despite a stunning innings of 125 runs from Smriti Mandhana, India suffered a 43-run defeat, thus conceding the series 1-2 to the visitors.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced that GS Lakshmi, a member of the ICC International Panel of Match Referees, imposed the fine after India was deemed two overs short of the target, taking time allowances into account.

"In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for every over if their side fails to bowl in the allotted time," the ICC stated.

The Indian captain, Harmanpreet Kaur, accepted the charge and the proposed sanction, waiving the need for a formal hearing.

Golf community outraged as 17 players suspended

NEW DELHI, 23 SEPT

The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) has suspended 17 professional golfers for participating in the Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) Invitational Tournament at Jaypee Greens, Greater Noida, from 17 to 19 September.

The suspensions include some of India's leading golfers, notably Jeev Milkha Singh Bhullar, a multiple-time Asian Tour winner and Olympian, alongside Aman Raj, Harendra Gupta, Karandeep Kochhar, and Sachin Baisoya.

Players argue they were not listed for Chennai Open, which was held simultaneously, and therefore took part in the IGPL event. They contend that the Disciplinary Action Committee (DAC) exceeded its authority by issuing suspension orders before completing a full inquiry. The decision has prompted legal challenges, with cases already filed at Delhi High Court by Ranjeet Singh and Kapil Kumar. Critics say several DAC members and other officials participated in a concurrent Pune tournament, raising questions. *—ANI*

Captain Stokes in Ashes? England announces squad

LONDON, 23 SEPT

England captain Ben Stokes is on track to be fit for the start of the Ashes series against Australia and he'll have a new vice-captain Down Under in Harry Brook.

England's 16-man squad for the Ashes was announced on Tuesday and will be led by Stokes, who has been recovering from a shoulder injury that ruled him out of the final test of the home series against India this summer.

The first test of the Ashes is in Perth from Nov. 21 and Stokes is expected to be available, England said.

Brook, England's recently appointed captain in the white-ball formats, will take over as vice-captain of the test team from Ollie Pope, who kept his place in the squad.

Among the pace options is Mark Wood, who returned to the squad following his recovery from a left knee injury and Matthew Potts, who last featured at test level in December against New Zealand. Shoaib Bashir has recovered from the finger injury sustained during the India series and is the only specialist spinner selected.

Batting allrounder Will Jacks could make his first appearance since 2022. *—ANI*

Atiqa misses podium finish in Slovakia

ORECHOVA, 23 SEPT

India's racing prodigy, Atiqa Mir, showcased her immense talent by finishing an impressive fourth in the Champions of the Future Academy (COFTA) karting series. She was in contention for victory for most of the thrilling race at the Slovakia Karting Centre.

The 10-year-old driver, who recently secured a win in the DAMC series in Dubai, is the first Indian to receive support from Formula 1 and is part of the F1 Academy DYD programme. Finishing just 0.32 seconds behind the race winner in the mini category, Atiqa made history as the first Indian to achieve a top-four placement in the championship's history and marked the highest finish by a female competitor this season.

10-year-old driver Atiqa Mir is the first Indian to receive support from F1 *PHOTO: X/KUNALASHA*

In the second race of the weekend, she was running comfortably in third place until being hit from behind on lap seven, causing her to lose several positions and ultimately finishing 11th.

Reflecting on her performance, Atiqa remarked, "I was so close to the win and the podium but happy at the same time with my progress against this top European grid. It's nice to see all the hard work and training paying off."

Her father, Asif Nazir Mir, a former Formula Asia Vice Champion, praised his daughter's efforts: "It was an incredible drive by Atiqa against this quality of drivers. Her hard work is beginning to pay off now." Atiqa made history last year by becoming the first Indian to secure a podium in the Mini Under 10 category at Round 6 in Abu Dhabi. *—PTI*

CRICKET ICON BIDS ADIEU

Legendary umpire Harold 'Dickie' Bird dies at 92

YORKSHIRE, 23 SEPT

The Yorkshire County Cricket Club has announced the passing of esteemed former cricketer and international umpire Harold Dennis "Dickie" Bird MBE OBE at the age of 92. The club's statement expressed, "It is with profound sadness that The Yorkshire County Cricket Club announces the passing of one of cricket's most beloved figures, who died peacefully at home."

Bird, known for his unwavering dedication to cricket and synonymous with Yorkshire Cricket, served as President of the Yorkshire County Cricket Club from 2014, overseeing two County Championship titles during his tenure. Born on 19 April, 1933, in Barnsley, Yorkshire, Bird's playing career spanned 93 first-class matches, netting 3,314 runs before injuries redirected him to umpiring.

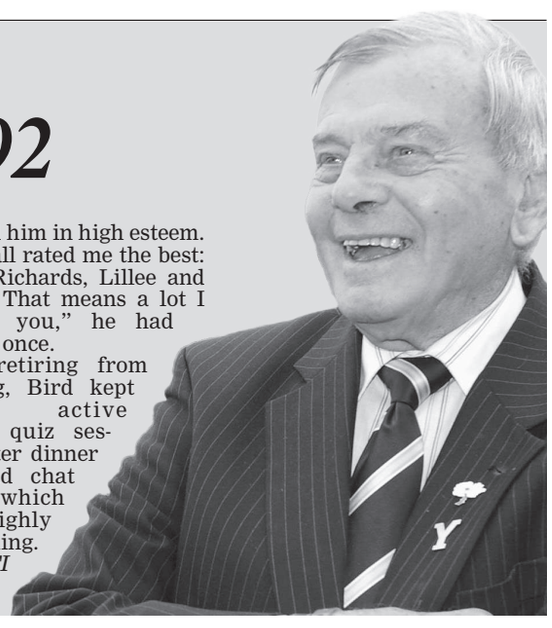
His illustrious career saw him officiate in 66 Test matches and 69 One Day Internationals, including three World Cup finals. The club highlighted, "He became a national treasure, known not only for his umpiring excellence but also for his eccentricities and warmth." Bird was honoured with an MBE in 1986 and an OBE in 2012 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to cricket. He formed a famous on field alliance with countryman late David Shepherd, who died in 2009.

Bird was also a favourite with the spectators and the players alike for the accuracy of his decisions and idiosyncrasies which included arriving at the match venue as early as 6 am.

19 APRIL, 1933 - 23 SEPT, 2025

During a 1974 Test match at Old Trafford against England, Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar got a haircut from Bird because his hair kept getting into his eyes.

The Englishman used a pair of scissors he kept to cut threads from the ball's seam to trim Gavaskar's hair mid-match, later exclaiming: "What all umpires need to carry." But Bird was always a likeable figure on the field, and the best players of his time held him in high esteem.

"They all rated me the best: Sobers, Richards, Lillee and Botham. That means a lot I can tell you," he had admitted once.

After retiring from umpiring, Bird kept himself active through quiz sessions, after dinner talks and chat shows, which were highly entertaining. *—PTI*